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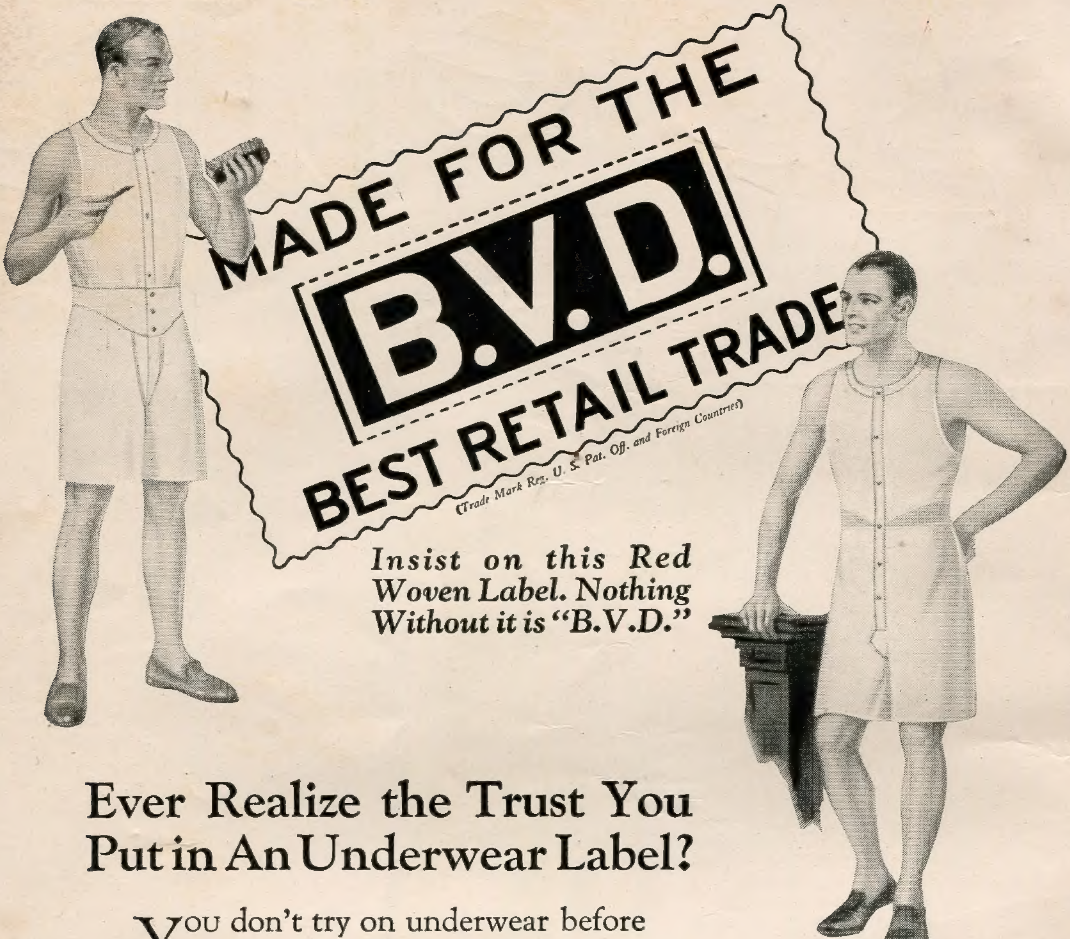
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Joseph Cox
EDITOR

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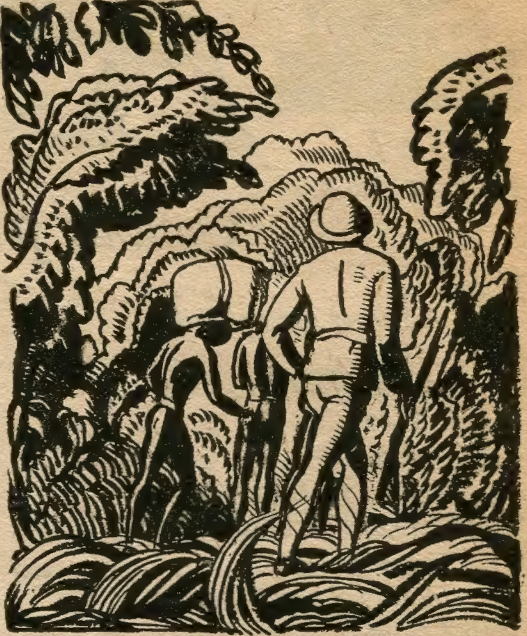
By L. PATRICK GREENE

BOOTS



JOHN LAWRENCE sat down gingerly on his camp bed, grimacing wryly at its protesting squeaks. Despite the fact that it had been specially made for him and that he had further reinforced the native carpenter's labor with struts of ironwood, he was never quite sure that it would bear up under the strain to which he subjected it.

As usual, he sighed with relief when, having made its protest, the creaking ceased and the bed showed no signs of collapsing. Even so, Lawrence took no chances and moved very cautiously as he bent down to unlace his boots.

They were well-worn boots—so worn out, in fact, that they were merely the ruined remnants of boots. The uppers were gashed in many places; the eyelets were torn out and the soles—makeshift affairs of tanned hide clumsily stitched to the uppers—were wrinkled and worn to paper thinness.

They were boots which had through weary months come in daily contact with the thorny trails of Africa, with the jungle trails of the East Coast, especially with the trails about the kraal of N'Dabula. That country is, technically, Portuguese territory, although N'Dabula's people swear they will not acknowledge any white overlords and boast that they "permit" the Portuguese to dwell in their land. But N'Dabula's people are of Zulu stock, stiff-necked and, notoriously, boasters. However, because they knew Lawrence and his boots nearly as well as he knew them and their ways, nearly as well as he knew their jungle trails, they respected him and were almost willing to acknowledge the overlordship of his—boots.

His native name, translated and shorn of the vernacular's flowery imagery, was "Great Boots and Heart," and it was no idle whim or rule of grammar which gave "Boots" the place of honor. A significant fact, that.

The boots removed, Lawrence inspected them closely, estimating the distance they could still give him, shaking his head doubtfully at his optimistic estimate of ten more miles; after that he would be forced to wear clumsy native sandals. He cursed softly at the thought of the long treks he had yet to make before he could report success to those who employed him.

From a shelf nailed to the mud wall of his hut he took a leather wallet, containing waxed thread, awl and a cobbler's needle, with which he set to work repairing some of the ravages of rotting mud and scorching heat; knife-edged rocks and steel-hard thorns.

"And that's all I can do," he said presently as, having daubed them with grease to make them more pliable, he set the boots carefully on the ground and looked at them, a whimsical smile on his face.

They were storied boots; their scars gave mute evidence of many a stirring

What makes an overlord in the African jungle

adventure, of obstacles met and overcome.

They showed signs of having been subjected, and that recently, to furnace heat; a faint scent of wood ash and burning leather seemed to emanate from them.

Two nights ago Lawrence had, almost single-handed, fought a bush fire, saving a kraal from destruction while the inhabitants of that kraal fled in shrieking fear from the place, believing themselves accursed by the spirits. Later, when they returned to their kraal, finding their huts and prized possessions unharmed, they gave thanks to those same spirits and never once thought of the white man or of the boots he had worn while stamping out the swiftly advancing fire spirit.

A large piece had been chewed out of the right upper. A hungry hyena had taken that boot as a dessert, a final course to a meal consisting of a leather cartridge belt, well smeared with grease, the contents of the stock pot and the big toe of a native carrier; it was that man's yell of fear which had awakened Lawrence from a dreamless sleep.

Lawrence had recovered his boot, first giving the hyena after dinner coffee in the shape of a well-directed bullet, bandaged his carrier's foot with expert efficiency and resumed his interrupted sleep.

It was while recovering from an attack of blood poisoning that he came to the conclusion that Napoleon might have been right when he said, "An army marches on its belly," but he, John Lawrence, was convinced that in Africa a man, a white man weighing two hundred pounds and standing six foot two in his stocking feet, traveled on boots—or not at all.

For instance: If he had not gone barefooted after the hyena, he would not have infected himself, would not have been a helpless cripple for three sweltering weeks. Worse yet—during those three inactive weeks the concession he was seeking, unofficially, for his government almost slipped from his hands; nearly all the work he had done, months of crafty propaganda, had been undone by the very ornately uniformed emissaries of another power. Because of his barefooted indiscretion he was faced with months more of lonely exile, of passing to and fro along winding trails, building anew his reputation for honesty, courage, strength of purpose and unfaltering justice.

A native runner entered the hut, a mail pouch slung across his shoulders.

"You have made good time, M'Kubi," Lawrence commended.

"I would have been here three days ago, Bwana, but the rivers were in flood and there were lions—"

"There are always lions," Lawrence agreed sententiously.

And thus casually did these two dismiss the perils of the two hundred mile trek to the nearest railhead.

"There were but these few letter,

Bwana," M'Kubi continued, as he handed to the white man the contents of the mail pouch.

"And no parcel, M'Kubi?"

"No parcel, Bwana."

Lawrence cursed.

"And these letters? They have been opened. You were stopped on the trail?"

M'Kubi grinned.

"Yah, Bwana. The black soldier dogs of the Portuguese stopped me and took the letters to a white man who was hidden from my sight in the bush. But I heard his voice. It was the fat voice of a fat man. The white man was very angry. I think the letters did not please him, and the soldier who returned them to me was bleeding from the lash of a sjambok."

Lawrence nodded.

"Best go sleep now, M'Kubi. I will give orders that no noise is to be made—no drum talk or singing."

"Bwana!" M'Kubi expressed his thanks. "But first I will eat and drink. It is permitted?"

"It is permitted," Lawrence answered with a chuckle, knowing that M'Kubi would do little sleeping while beer remained to be drunk, or until he had told the others the full tale of his bush journey.

The native silently left the hut and Lawrence turned to his mail. All the letters, save one, were official, written in a spidery, old-maidish hand on lavender-scented paper, inclosed in unofficial, tinted envelopes. They were in an elaborate code, which gave them the surface appearance of the innocent letters of a doting aunt to her daring nephew. They cautioned Lawrence to be on his guard against the sun, over-indulgence in whisky, beasts of prey and mosquitoes—specially warning him against mosquitoes. One asked him to send by return mail—and the request was underlined—some native curios for sale at the church bazaar.

"They're getting impatient," Lawrence mused as he held a lighted match to these communications. "They ought to know that haste only slows things in this country. Hurry a native on the trail, tread on his heels, and he'll sit down and wait until you've passed on out of sight. Then, ten to one, he'll either fall asleep or return to the kraal he's just left. Oh, well—"

He opened, then, his remaining letter. It bore the heading of a shoe store in Johannesburg, and read:

> Dear Sir:
>
> Re. your esteemed order. We regret to say that we are not able to fill same. Boots of the size you specify are not stocked by us or, as far as we have been able to discover, by any other shoe shop in this country.
>
> We have written to a wholesale house in England but very much doubt if they will be able to supply us from stock.
>
> If, as we judge from your letter, your need is urgent, we suggest that you supply us with a pattern of your foot and fill up and return the enclosed self-measurement form. On receipt of same we will have a pair made by a local shoemaker and forward same to you on completion.
>
> Believe us to be,
> Yours very truly—

John Lawrence smiled grimly, looked ruefully at his tattered shoes, then, placing his right foot firmly on a large bit of newspaper, carefully traced its outlines.

FOUR months passed; four lazy, swiftly passing months, each day so like the last that today was only yesterday stretched into the morrow; days of heat and flies and annoyances which, by reason of their number, similarity and pettiness, assumed Gargantuan proportions.

Twice during that period M'Kubi had made the trip to the railhead and back—empty-handed as far as boots were concerned—to his Bwana's encampment.

And now, here he was for the third time presenting himself to the combined station master, telegraph operator and janitor who was in charge of the tiny station, asking if there were letters for his Bwana—Bwana Lawrence.

"No letters—only this."

The white man handed M'Kubi a heavy parcel.

"So you know what's in it, eh?" he continued, in answer to M'Kubi's chuckles of delight.

"Truly. What else should a package so large and heavy contain but my Bwana's boots?"

The railroad man shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll sleep tonight in the shed?"

M'Kubi shook his head.

"But your Bwana has arranged all that with me. He pays me to find you a place to sleep and—"

"I start back now," M'Kubi replied. "There is no time to waste."

"You are tired. You have trekked far today. After a long night's sleep you will trek the faster on the morrow. You—"

"I trek now, white man," M'Kubi said firmly. "I will sleep but little until I have delivered these into my Bwana's hands. Without them he is as helpless as a hamstrung elephant. Yet, because he is greater than an elephant, his heart stouter, not for one day has he kept off the trail. *Wo-we!* He has trekked across rock, which seared even the soles of *my* feet, with bloody rags wrapped about his feet; his heels are blistered, his nails bruised.

"I have said to him, '*Au-a!*' Many times have I said this, 'Let us make a thing in which to carry you, a thing such as the Portuguese use.' But he always refused it—laughingly at first; later, in irritation, saying, 'I am a man, M'Kubi, and men walk on their own feet.' And so—I hasten back, sleeping but little on the trail, in order that my Bwana may walk on his own feet, and walk in comfort."

With that, and a farewell wave on his hand, he moved off at a jig-jog trot and was soon lost to sight in the jungle thickets.

"He's up to some deviltry, I bet," the railroad man concluded decidedly. "There ain't a nigger living that'ud work himself like that for a white man."

But then, he did not know M'Kubi; neither could he appreciate the intense loyalty a man like John Lawrence commanded from all those with whom he came in daily contact.

All through that day M'Kubi kept to the trail, and on into the night, until sheer exhaustion forced him to halt. He lighted a fire then, ate sparingly of his frugal stores and, climbing up into a tree, slept fitfully asprawl one of its lower branches.

Sunrise saw him again swinging along the trail like a tireless automaton. He was accompanied for a little way by a pock-marked man, dressed in the uniform of the black soldiery of the Portuguese. Both men boasted. The soldier said he was soon to be promoted and that he was, even now, hastening on a mission of great importance. And M'Kubi, for his part, spoke mysteriously of the parcel he was carrying, saying that on it depended the life of a powerful white man.

Shortly after the soldier left him, taking a trail which swung southward, M'Kubi was forced to make a slight detour, thus avoiding five sleeping lions. He walked very cautiously at that time. The cracking of a twig under foot might awaken the big cats—and they might be hungry.

He halted at mid-day at a waterhole in a chaos of rocks and, squatting on his haunches, slept, his head resting on his up-drawn knees, the fingers of his right hand gripping the string which secured his Bwana's parcel.

He was awakened, drowsily, by a tingling sensation in those fingers; his faculties were numbed by weariness so that he only vaguely sensed that some one was taking the parcel from him.

Opening his eyes he saw a fat, pyjama-clad man standing before him; behind the white man were some twenty armed and uniformed natives; behind them were others, carriers, resting on their packs. Four others carried the *machilla*—a hammock slung on a stout pole—from which the white man had just risen.

"We could have killed you," the white man spoke the vernacular in a soft, womanish voice, "but we have no quarrel with you. Had you not wakened we would have taken the parcel and the mail pouch you carry and gone our way. Now you are awake and you will give them to us."

M'Kubi shook his head; his fingers tightened about the string of the parcel, drawing it toward him. To his surprize the string came away loosely in his hand and loud sniggers of laughter greeted his ludicrous expression of surprize.

He looked for the first time to his right and saw that the pock-marked soldier he had met earlier in the day, was holding his Bwana's parcel tauntingly toward him, pretending to slash it with a keen edged knife. The man had crept up and cut the string whilst M'Kubi slept.

For a brief moment M'Kubi sat as one stunned, silently reproaching himself for having been found unworthy of the trust his Bwana reposed in him.

Then he saw red. His muscles tensed and he launched his tough, wiry body at the man who had dared to place profane hands on his Bwana's property.

Surprized by the sudden attack, the other made no attempt at defense but went down, clutching feebly at the package, M'Kubi's hands about his throat.

For a little while they rolled over and over in the dust until the white man gave a curt order and a soldier ran forward, swinging his rifle like a club, bringing down the butt, twice, with bone-crushing force on M'Kubi's head.

Again M'Kubi saw red—a crimson, blood-like mist—then bright flashes—then, total darkness.

The pock-marked one rose shakily to his feet, spat upon his prostrate foe and handed the parcel to the white man, while the soldier carefully searched M'Kubi, stripping his clothing from him.

The white man quickly opened the package, disdainfully dropping to the ground the colossal pigskin boots it contained. He cursed volubly as he read the letter inclosed.

"Is there nothing else," he demanded of the man who had searched M'Kubi.

"Nothing, senhor," that man replied.

The white man turned angrily upon the pock-marked one.

"And it was for this," he snarled, "that I make a long journey in the heat of the day. To take from a black dog a pair of feet coverings."

"How was I to know, senhor," the other man stammered, cowering like an ill-treated dog. "I knew only that the parcel contained something of great importance. He, himself, told me—"

"Fool!" the white man yelled and struck furiously at the pock-marked man with a *kiboko*, struck him again and again, across the bare legs, across his face.

His anger somewhat appeased, the white man climbed into his *machilla*, threatening the luckless native with further beatings at the evening halt, and a few minutes later the place was deserted save for a very still M'Kubi and, just beyond him, a pair of pigskin boots.

LESS than an hour later the pock-marked man returned furtively to the place. At his approach, three hyenas threateningly bared their fangs, then slunk away into the cover of the bush; vultures flew heavily up into the branches of near-by trees and croaked discordantly.

With a little cry of triumph the pock-marked one ran to the boots and put them on his feet—the right on the left, the left on the right—laced them up and shuffled noiselessly away.

The boots were far too big for him; they rubbed the skin off the tops of his toes; they chafed his heels and ankles; they made his progress painfully slow and noisy.

But pride in the possession of such boots made him impervious to pain; he believed that they would mask his spoor from those who might be sent after him, thus making it unnecessary for him to exercise caution other than that of avoiding military posts and trails.

At sun-down, very weary, his feet bleeding, he came to the crude grass shelter of a Wanderobo.

That savage hunter greeted him with great respect, tinged with fear. First, because he was a soldier of the white men whose ruthless rule was a byword among the lesser tribes of the country; second, because of his boots. Never had the Wanderobo seen such magnificent boots.

So he placed food before the pock-marked man and a gourd of fermented drink. That done he sat down opposite his guest and humbly waited for that great man to speak.

He had not long to wait. His appetite appeased, the pock-marked man talked, boasting of his fighting prowess, his exploits in the hunt and of how his white overlords came to him for advice in all things. The boots, he said, had been given to him as a reward for his great cunning.

Later, when the desire for sleep dulled his intelligence and the fermented drink had further loosed his tongue, he told many more things—and spoke truly. He confessed that he had deserted because of brutal, unjust, beatings; he gave voice to his fear that men would be sent after him and appealed to the Wanderobo to save him.

Almost before he had concluded his plea sleep claimed him.

For long minutes the hunter watched the face of his snoring visitor; then his attention was attracted to the boots and a light of cupidity shone in his red-rimmed eyes. He thoughtfully massaged the sole of his right foot; the big toe of it stuck outward at right angles: It had been broken and improperly set.

He called the sleeping man by name; at first, softly, then in a loud voice. There was no response.

Stooping forward he swiftly unlaced the boots, removed them, tied the laces together and slung them round his neck. Then, rising stealthily, he collected his scanty belongings—spears, bow and arrows and a few skins—and vanished silently into the night.

The pock-marked man was dreaming happily of the triumphant entry he would make into his home kraal; his boots would give him a position comparable with that of a headman—

Presently the dream changed to a nightmare of torture. Women were prodding his feet with heated thorns.

He awoke, screaming, to find ants swarming over his naked feet. He called aloud for the Wanderobo, then limped painfully toward a near-by pool, in order to free his feet from the torture of ants.

ABOUT this time the Wanderobo was lacing the boots. On the inside of the right one he had cut a hole through which his broken toe protruded.

The following morning he hunted on the edge of the swamp and, having fired one of his poisoned arrows into the belly of a buffalo, followed cautiously on its spoor, knowing that soon it would drop.

After an hour's trek through the reeds he came up with it as it was leaning against a stunted thorn tree, facing him. Its eyes were glazed; its sides heaved convulsively; death was very near.

Of a sudden new strength came to it and it bellowed, pawed savagely at the ground, then charged.

It was—and the Wanderobo knew it well—a last, dying effort; it would end, almost immediately in a total collapse. For him, there was no danger; he had only to spring aside and, with confidence born of experience, delay that leap until the bull was almost upon him.

Then he made the effort—and failed. The boots betrayed him. He slipped in the mud and went down directly in the beast's path.

It was the Wanderobo's last hunt; the buffalo's last kill. Hunters of Chief Jhentsi found them several days later—the skeleton of the buffalo and the skeleton of the man. One of the bull's sweeping horns had apparently pierced the man's middle. The hunters laughed and one of them took the boots which so grotesquely shod the skeleton's feet.

"The chief will make me a headman in return for these," he said, daring the others to take them from him.

A MONTH later John Lawrence—his clothing torn, patched and torn again; his feet shod in clumsy sandals tied by strips of cloth and bark fiber—took the trail which led to the kraal of N'Dabula, in order to be present at a great gathering of the chiefs of the district. A day had been set apart by the paramount chief when they would hear his claims, and the claims of a rival power, for a rich rubber concession. After the hearing they would give their decision, and John Lawrence would get the concession he sought or discover that all his labors had been in vain.

He was confident of victory. His constant journeyings up and down the land—doctoring, giving wise advice, playing the part of a man, his hand always against the oppressor—had won for him a multitude of friends. The people, he knew, were for him; so, too, he thought, were most of the chiefs.

Only one, Chief Jhentsi, had shown himself to be violently antagonistic. That, Lawrence reasoned, was because he had been heavily bribed and kept out of his reach. Smaller chiefs, of course, were stictly neutral, waiting to see which way the others went.

But, wise in the way of natives, knowing that trivial things often changed their reasoned plans, Lawrence left nothing to chance. With him, confidence bred increased caution.

So with him marched a long line of porters, each carrying presents for the chiefs; presents which he had carefully hoarded against the occasion.

He himself carried a small pack which contained a scarlet uniform, a plumed hat and a richly chased sword. He knew full well the advantage of a good appearance and intended changing just before he reached the kraal, hoping that the magnificence of his uniform would blind the natives to the nakedness of his bruised and bleeding feet.

A half day's trek from their destination they came to a wide and swift-flowing river.

"We can not cross, Bwana," the carriers said, shouting in order to make their voices heard above the roar of the falls below. "We must go upstream to the other ford."

"That would delay us five, maybe six, days," Lawrence answered firmly. "We would arrive at N'Dabula's kraal when all was over. We cross here. Follow me."

"We will be carried over the falls," they expostulated. "To cross here is death."

"If we do not cross the river here, all we have done is made of no account. Therefore, follow me."

He climbed down the bank and, entering the water, forged slowly ahead, straining against the pull of the current, holding his packages high above his head.

The carriers watched him, babbling excitedly, endeavoring by loud talk to justify their decision not to cross, fearing they were acting the part of coward; convinced they were being wise men.

Half-way across Lawrence halted and looked back for the first time at his men. The water was up to his armpits; the current swayed him visibly.

"This is the deepest part," he shouted. "Come—there is no danger. Let the tallest be at the front of the line, the shortest in the middle, other tall ones at the rear. And let each one hold on to the loin cloth of the man before him."

He turned again and went slowly forward, singing loudly, making light of the difficulties of the crossing.

The carriers hesitated a little longer, then, exhorted by the stouter among them, they formed into line as their Bwana had ordered and commenced the crossing.

"We are coming, Bwana," they called to him and he went even slower that they might catch up with him.

Suddenly he stumbled badly, partly recovered and stumbled again. The cloth lashing of one of his sandals had come undone, catching in a jagged rock.

He tugged violently to free himself. The cloth ripped, throwing him completely off his balance. He dropped the things he was carrying—rifles and pack—in a frantic effort to regain his poise, but the current was too strong for him and he fell face forward and was carried away.

Immediately a panic seized the carriers. A shout went up, "A crocodile has taken the Bwana," and, discarding their loads, beating the water to a yeasty foam with the palms of their hands, they made a wild scramble for the bank.

When the last man had clambered to safety they suddenly quieted and looked at each other with shamefaced eyes.

"We are fools," said one. "It is known there are no crocodiles here. The Bwana stumbled—that is all. There was no need for us to have dropped our packs. The Bwana will be angry."

"The Bwana has gone. What need of the packs? The Bwana is dead. How can he be angry?"

Some hastened down the bank, searching the water's surface.

They found their Bwana clinging to a rock about ten feet from the bank. He was bleeding from a jagged cut in the forehead.

"Make haste," he said, in answer to their shouts of encouragement. "I grow weak, I can not hold out much longer and—" he laughed grimly—"the falls are very near."

They did not hesitate but, linking hands, entered the water.

Ten minutes later they had him out on the bank, spent, all but unconscious.

He recovered quickly and, looking up at the shamefaced carriers who surrounded him, smiled.

"The fault is not yours," he said. "There is no blame to you. The fault was my feet—and theirs the blame. Now let us trek—we have far to go."

And so, empty-handed, they came that night to the kraal of N'Dabula.

They looked like the followers of a poverty-stricken man; but, because the spirit of John Lawrence imbued them all, they marched like conquerors.

But the ague which presages fever shook John Lawrence's big frame.

ON THE morrow the chiefs assembled with that display of theatrical ostentation so dear to the savage mind.

Their regiments, painted and befeathered, marched and countermarched, then formed in solid ranks about the council place, making a savage, living background against which the white men would strut and play their parts in an endeavor to please the mind, ear and eye of the stern-faced chiefs.

Four white men stood before the chiefs. They were dressed in a uniform of scarlet, blue and gold; huge white gauntlets covered their hands; the fronts of their knee-high boots were covered with gold-thread patterns; their spurs jingled musically when they moved.

Behind them a detachment of native soldiers stood stiffly at attention.

At an order these fired a salute, then deployed to the right and the left, making way for other soldiers to come forward; and each of these was heavily laden with presents for the chiefs.

The presents distributed—and there was no mistaking the pleasure they gave—the spokesman of the white men made a lengthy oration.

He dwelt at great length on the ability of his king to protect the people of N'Dabula from all their enemies, promising them many things in return for the concession they sought.

The speech concluded, the chiefs conferred hastily together, then N'Dabula answered, speaking for them all.

"We have heard you, white man," he said. "We return you many thanks for the presents you have given us. Never have we seen such wealth or believed such things existed. *Wo-we!* Truly you are the mouthpieces of a great chief.

"Some of us—those who follow the Chief Jhentsi—would have us give you the concession you seek without further debate. And almost I am of a mind to do that. But men have called me 'the Just One'. Therefore, having given my word, I keep my word. The spokesman of another white chief is here. We will now hear him and receive the presents he offers. After that we will give our judgment. Let the man my people call 'Great Boots and Heart' now speak. I have spoken."

There was silence for a little while, then a stir was heard outside the council place; the voices of the people raised in shouts of "Good luck, Great Heart," "May the day be yours," and "May your shadow never grow less!"

The chiefs smiled; the four white men whispered uneasily together.

The warriors who guarded the gate of the pole stockade which surrounded the council place separated and John Lawrence walked slowly between their ranks.

At the sight of him the chiefs gasped, then frowned angrily. The white men tittered audibly. They felt they had no reason to fear what this ragged, shoeless man could do.

"We are safe," they assured each other. "He is drunk. He's destroyed his case already. He looks like a white kaffir."

Lawrence came to a halt not twenty paces from where the chiefs sat.

"Greetings!" he said thickly, and paused, endeavoring to overcome the fever weakness. His blue eyes were unnaturally bright; his face—pale under the tan—was drawn and haggard; his right eye was badly swollen; a blood-edged wound scarred his forehead; his lips quivered. But his brain worked swiftly, abnormally acute.

He looked about the place, noting the ostentatious display of his rivals and the presents which were piled on the ground before the chiefs. He smiled slightly, glad now that his presents were lost, realizing that he could not have competed with all this.

Something drew his attention to the Chief Jhentsi and he stared fixedly at that crafty-faced mountain of fatness, scowling slightly though, at the time, wondering why he did so.

"Greetings!" he said again, smiling confidently, seeing clearly the course he meant to take. "Chiefs, what need of words between us? You know me—as I know you. I bring you no presents. Of what need are presents between understanding men? There is nothing you have that I wish to *buy* from you. I seek only to work for your good and the good of your people. That you know.

"My tongue is not forked. I make no promises—except a promise of just dealing. I come to you with no display of wealth and armed power. Of what need? You know me. I know myself. I say that I am the least amongst those in the councils of my overlord. Think on that—then judge the worth of those who sent me.

"And, look you, think not that my present condition—I am in rags, my beard is not trimmed—is evidence of my nation's weakness and poverty. I chose to come before you thus that you may decide my claim on the merits of that claim. Think on this: The handsomest pot does not always contain the best beer.

"Further, my present poverty is a sign of my people's wealth and great power. A bellowing cow does not give the most milk—

"But I have said enough. Make your choice—but think well before you choose. I have spoken."

He passed his hands wearily across his eyes and stepped back a pace, bruising his naked heel on a sharp stone.

The white men laughed at his awkward stumble and their laugh was echoed by Chief Jhentsi.

Lawrence started at that and walked slowly toward the man, pointing his finger at him scornfully.

"Dog!" he said scornfully, articulating with difficulty. "Dog!"

The fat man ceased laughing. Rising to his feet he walked angrily to meet the white man, shuffling awkwardly because his feet were encased in over-large pigskin boots. A hole gaped in the inside toe of the right one.

"Dog!" Lawrence said again and raised his hands menacingly.

The sight of the boots had flooded his mind with nightmarish memories of all the discomforts and losses the lack of those boots had caused him.

"Dog—" he almost screamed the insult—"take off those boots. They—"

Then the fever completely claimed him and he dropped unconscious to the ground.

WHEN conscious sanity returned to him again he found himself in a large, well-built hut, lying on a pile of feather-soft skins. Women squatted on the ground beside him, waving leafy twigs to keep the flies and mosquitoes from settling on him.

In answer to his whispered request—he was very feeble—they gave him water to drink, then quietly left the hut. A moment later the Chief N'Dabula entered.

"Greetings, Great Heart," the chief said jovially. "Very soon strength will come back to you."

"Of what need strength—when I have failed."

N'Dabula laughed.

"So you have failed?" he chuckled.

"Aye. Why make a sport of me? Tell me what happened after the fever closed my eyes."

"*Au-a!* What should happen? First Jhentsi obeyed your order. He took off the boots he wore, gladly too, I think, for they had rubbed the skin off his toes."

"Go on," Lawrence groaned.

"Truly," N'Dabula continued in a confidential tone. "Almost the day was lost to you. Those others—*Wo-we!* They were dressed as great chiefs; the presents they gave blinded us to truth. You chose to forget the concession you sought and dared to upbraid a man those others would have endeavored to appease with soft words. Chief Jhentsi it was, and you dared to call him a dog because he sat before you wearing boots. *Wo-we!* That was a bone for us to chew upon. We knew that you always acted that way with men of your own following. 'It is an act of disrespect,' you have always said to your carriers, 'to come before me with boots on your feet—' "

"The order was made because shoes spoiled their feet, made them lag behind on the trail and during the hunt," Lawrence interjected half-heartedly.

N'Dabula waved his hand.

"You must not talk. Rest. I will talk. I always had in mind that some such thing was the reason of the order. But of the reason—no matter. The order was made, and you, alone, unescorted, dared to call a chief to task because he had disobeyed the order. *Wo-we!* That was enough for us. That was enough to show us what we had always known—what we had for a little while forgotten: That your tongue is not forked, nor, once having given a word do you recall it.

"And so, remembering all things, we returned to those others their presents and sent them away. Into your hands, when health is restored, we will give the concession. Say now—have you failed?"

Lawrence grinned happily.

"I think I can sleep again," he said.

"Good." The chief rose to his feet. "But before I go— Is there anything you want? Have my women taken good care of you?"

"There is nothing I want. The women have tended me well."

The chief nodded.

"Rest in peace," he said.

"Aye. May your path be smooth."

When the chief had left the hut Lawrence stretched himself lazily, then stiffened, frowning anxiously at the heavy, numbing pain in his feet.

Fearing that they had become infected he tried to sit up in order that he might examine them; but he was far too weak for that, too weak, indeed, to throw off the blankets which covered them.

"*O-he!*" he cried, and, to the woman who came in answer to his shout, "My feet—they feel as if an elephant were sitting on them, squashing out their life."

The woman chuckled loudly and drew back the blankets.

"Small wonder," she said. "Look!"

She raised his head so that he could see his feet—see, rather, the pigskin boots which encased them.

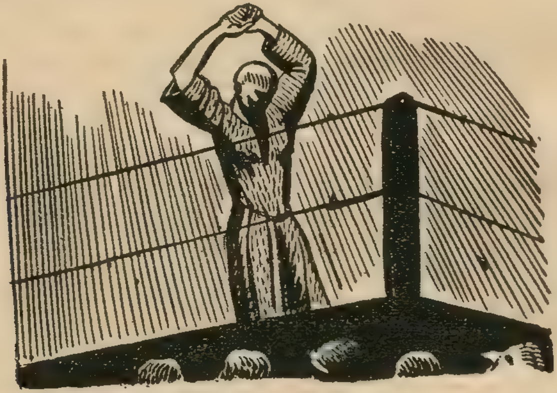
"Chief Jhentsi put them on," she said. "With his own hands he waited upon you. Shall I take them off?"

Lawrence shook his head. He felt that now his cup of joy was full to overflowing.

"Nay," he answered. "Let them stay. They will make the trails I travel in my dreams easier to tread." And turning over he slept peacefully.

Clancy and the Scranton Dummy Obligato

By EDWARD L. McKENNA



"IN THIS corner, ladies and gentlemen—"

Ladies. Three wildlooking young women from Scranton's speedy set. Their escorts, if you like. State Street Sadie from Wilkesbarre and a few of her professional sisters. The wife of a mine boss. The sweetheart of one of the preliminary boys.

Gentlemen. Colliery laborers who have come in from Pittston via the Laurel Line. Coal miners—muckers, they call them; it's the origin of the word. Steel-workers. Blast-furnace helpers. Pool players. Charlie Hearne, who boasts that his saloon has never been closed down since Prohibition. Circuit Court Judge Mullane. Allen Sime, who owns and runs some of those places on the other side of the Jersey Central tracks.

"Jimmy Clancy—of New York—a hundred and forty-seven pounds."

Jimmy Clancy, a sullen, black-haired boy with big, icy-blue eyes and a puffiness underneath them. Of New York. Also of Baltimore, Pimlico, New Orleans, South Boston, Bridgeport, Norwich, Peoria, Fargo, North Dakota and Cairo, Illinois. Educated in the New York Catholic Protectory. At one time member of the Humpty Jackson gang.

Best fighting weight one hundred and thirty-five. A hundred forty-seven, did the guy say? Take a look at him. Hundred fifty-five, if he's an ounce. Hundred and sixty maybe. Seen his best days. Used to be good.

'Member that time he fought Allentown Joe Murphy over in the old National at Philly? Nah, it wasn't the old National, it was the Olympia. Nah, it was the old National, Jack McGuigan's club.

"Over here, Silent Mengo, of Pittston. One hundred and forty-five pounds."

Silent Mengo. A nice hand for the local boy, but he does not hear it, for he has never heard anything. A Lithuanian, twenty-two years old, trained to the minute. He's out of Landers' Colliery, ain't he? Sure. A dummy. He's pretty good. Funny about them dummies. He can take it. Ain't got much of a sock, but he can take it. Wears 'em down.

"Ten Rounds. Marquis of Queensbury rules."

Marquis of Queensbury rules, à la Scranton. Liberal interpretation of clinching, hitting with one hand free, infighting. *Clang. Clang.*

Here they go. Got a match. Go on, I missed a knockout that way once. Fact. It was Irish Patsy Cline and Eddie McAndr—

The reporter for the Scranton Republican sharpens his pencil and ticks round one off like this:

> *Clancy came out with a rush and landed two hard rights to the body. Mengo broke away and stabbed a left to the jaw. Clancy crowded him to the ropes and they clinched. Clancy pounded Mengo's stomach. The referee broke them and Clancy landed a stiff right to the head but it was high. Mengo hit Clancy with two light lefts. They clinched. On the break-away, Clancy landed with left and right to (sic) Mengo's head, and the crowd booed. Mengo led twice and was short with a right cross. Clancy countered with a hard right to the jaw and rushed Mengo to the ropes, swinging wildly with both hands. Clancy's round.*

Jim Clancy, waiting for round two, shuffling his feet in the rosin, and grasping the ropes with his gloved hands as he squats and rises three or four times to limber his legs.

A dummy, huh. Lou didn't tell me he was a dummy. I don't want to fight no dummy. A dummy, huh. I'll get him in a hurry, that's what I'll do. 'N'en beat it out of here. Syracuse—we're fightin' in Syracuse Friday. I'll—

Clang.

Up, Mary Ann. That-a-baby. Them lefts ain't nothing. Come on, let's get this over. In the other corner—no, you don't. Go on, get over there. Hunh! Hunh! In the kitchen a couple of times. He got nothing but a left. Go on, boo, you bums. I'll knock him in your lap.

Clang.

What, so soon?

Judge Mullane, in the ringside seats, dusting the ash from his cigar. Got a sweet right hand. Doesn't know anything. Out of shape. The honest, forthright craftsman's hand. I'm tired. Should have gone home and gone to bed. That young kid today, taking his exception, and trying to tell me about People vs. Crissman. Wah! Tomorrow he'll be telling me about Lord Coke.

Allan Sime, on the other side of the ring. Take five to four on Silent Mengo. Clancy won't last. Must drop around and see that new blond in the Bon Ton. Looks like a hustler to me. There's Myrtle over there—got some new bird. Bet he don't stop at the Casey tonight. *Clang.* There we are. Even money on the Dummy.

Seventh Round, according to the Scranton *Independent.*

> *Clancy took three lefts to get in close and hammer the Dummy. The referee broke them and Clancy protested. The referee warned Clancy. Clancy rushed the Dummy to the ropes and rapped a vicious right to the stomach. Mengo clinched. Clancy rushed again and caught the Dummy on the ropes. The referee pulled Clancy away and put them in the center of the ring. Clancy rushed but Mengo hit him with a left and crossed his right over, sending Clancy back on his heels. Clancy drove Mengo to the ropes, banging away with both hands to Mengo's head. The round ended with Mengo holding on. The referee pushed Clancy toward his corner and warned him for hitting Mengo after the bell. Clancy offered his hands to Mengo, but the Dummy refused to shake. The crowd booed Mengo. Clancy's round.*

The flappers and their friends. Now see, Coulton, wasn't that splendid, and you wanted to leave. Oh, I like that black-haired one—what's his name—Clancy? You like caveman, Sally? Oh, sometimes— For my part, I'd rather drive back, there's a dance at the Casey and— Well, this'll be over soon.

Judge Mullane. Wonder how it would feel to be poor and have to drink gin?

That's Clancy's last stand. Tiring fast. Has the fight won, if he can last. Bad condition. Too old. Old, old. Wonder how old he is? Thirty maybe. Well, there it is. Thirty's a boy in my business. When I was thirty—Wonder how it would feel to be thirty again and go down the street and have the girls look at you and away, and then back again. Huh. Old fool.

When I was thirty and hadn't a penny—Then that Soames case. Mighty lucky for me that there wasn't that Iowa decision then. Crazy decision, anyway. Wonder if the learned court ever heard of In Re Soames et Al? Used to think it was more important than the Dartmouth College case. That's young Coulton Ames over there. Huh. Taking girls to a prizefight. In my time the Dekes were more particular.

Jimmy Clancy, sucking a lemon that tastes of collodion, while his manager, Lou Weingold, works furiously on his tired legs, before the eighth.

What holds this guy up? I hit him on the button in the third, and he drops for a count of three. I sock him again in the fifth and only hurt my hand. He got a jaw like iron. From now on I take no chances with that mitt. Going for his mid-section from now on. I hadn't ought to have eat that corned beef for supper. I feel kinda lousy.

Clang.

Come on, Dummy, here's where you go. I don't mind them lefts. You'll go, or I'll kill you. I sock you and you just look foolish, and come out and push your left in my pan. You do, do you? How do you like that? Go on, drop! Drop! Leave us alone, boss.

Yah, you ham referee, you, afraid I'll make your home town boy look sick. Listen to 'em, out there. Telling me to leave go of him. He's been heeling me all through this bout, and nobody says a word. Come on, Mary Ann!

Ow! I did n't know you had a right hand, Dummy. For that you'll get yours, I'll—I'll—

Clang.

What? Oh, all right. Excuse me, Dummy. You won't, huh. You wait. You wait. You wait. All right. This round, I'll get him. Rub my legs, Lou. Listen, Lou. (A whisper like this—whishawhishawhisha.) Ah, go on. Go ahead. Slip it to me. Just before the bell. Go on. There's the whistle. Yeah, yeah.

Clang.

Lookit him. All the time, whoo-oo-ssh-sshing. Whoo-oo-ssh-ssh. Drive you nuts. Gee, I'll get him.

Come on, Dummy. You'll go.

Bang.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. S—

You'll hold on, will you. Let go of me! Mr. Referee, make him leave go of me—Go on, Hunh! Hunh! Short with that one. Lookit him cover up. Come on, Jim, get him now, get him quick, he's ready to go.

There goes his left again. He's coming out of it.

Whoo-oo-ssh-ssh.

I'll kill you! I'll kill you! You bum, you deaf-and-dumb bum, you can't beat me! Clancy, Clancy, I'm Clancy! I never got no even break, never in my life. I can't get it here. You're like everything else, you stand there, you keep me away. I hit you, you don't stay down. Lou Weingold crossed me, he knows I don't fight no dummies. I asked him for It, he didn't give It to me. You, and your foolish face and your stalling.

Whoo-oo-ssh-ssh.

Come on! *There!*

Clang-clang-clang-clang.

Silent Mengo writhing on the floor. The referee, shouting, cursing, pushing Clancy away. Judge Mullane, his face purple with anger, shaking his fist at the ring. Allen Sime, with a nasty, evil smile. The gallery pushing forward, shouting, menacing. Two policemen scrambling through the ropes.

And the Scranton *Times-Democrat's* caption:

CLANCY FOULS SILENT MENGO IN EIGHTH.

Flame Weapons

BY HAROLD LAMB

SIGHT of an old crossbow in a museum brings to mind that all modern inventions are not modern. The crossbow is Chinese, and dates probably to the sixteenth at least. And it is a repeating crossbow, working by the same principle as our repeating pistol.

A search through Oriental annals reveals other ancestors of present day European weapons.

But it is a little surprizing to find the modern hand grenade, flame-thrower and cannon in use in Asia centuries ago.

In Roman days vases filled with a fire compound were employed by the Persians at the siege of Petra. This compound was sulphur, asphalt and naphtha, and the vases were cast by mangonels. The flames that sprang up when the vessels broke could not be extinguished.

This was the origin of the much talked about Greek fire, that was borrowed by the Greeks from the Persians and Arabs. Its base was naphtha, which would burn on water, and it mystified the early crusaders. The Greeks discharged it from iron tubes mounted on a swivel.

Haroun al-Raschid availed himself of the sulphur-naphtha composition at the siege of Heraclea, and the crusading Franks had some bitter experience with this Arab *naft* in the twelfth century. At the siege of Acre, a Damascus engineer destroyed wooden towers of the crusaders by casting against them light clay vessels of the fluid until everything was well saturated. Then a flaming ball was thrown out and, as the old chronicle has it, "all was destroyed by flame, men, weapons, all."

During this thirteenth century flame weapons were highly developed by the Arabs. They had hand-grenades—small glass or clay jars that ignited when they broke. And a most curious fire-mace, that was to be broken over the head of a foeman—its owner being warned to keep well to windward. A kind of protective armor was fashioned out of boiled hide.

Flame throwers appeared in the form of portable tubes that could burn a man to an ash at thirty feet. Some of the names of these flame weapons, Dart of Cathay, the Chinese Flower, indicate that they had their source in China.

And in fact we find the Chinese of the thirteenth century very familiar with destructive fire. They had the *pao* that belched flaming powder, and the *fei-ho-tsing*, the "spear of fire that flies."

In general their powder merely fused; it did not detonate. But when the Mongols laid siege to Kai-fong Fu in 1232, the Chinese certainly had *pao* made of joints of great bamboo bound with chains. Rounded stones were cast by these crude cannon, which blew up rather frequently and wiped out everything in the vicinity. They must have been well loaded with a detonating charge, because the report could be heard for thirty miles.

When the *pao* on the citadel walls were to be discharged red lanterns were lighted, and the men in the lower trenches went into the dugouts. When the barrage was over, the first line sent up paper kites in the form of birds to report the effect of the discharge on the Mongols. Nothing very terrible, apparently, because the Mongol general Subotai laughed and said that the Chinese were trying to fight with red lights and paper birds.

Since then the Christian people have forged ahead rapidly in the making of weapons, fashioning better steel and deadly firearms, and—in the Great War—poison gas.

Now that the supremacy lies overwhelmingly with the West, it stirs the curiosity a little to remember that in those almost forgotten centuries the East held the mastery of flame weapons.

The Prow of the Living Figurehead

Bride of the Sea

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

TWENTY-EIGHT miles to the southwest of Land's End, Cornwall, lie the strange Scillies and their spawn, the Western Rocks, on the breast of the most unquiet and most populous sea in the world, the English Channel. Since Phœnicia ruled the waves good seamen have kept wide of them.

On an evening when the rising wail of the southwest wind in the rigging of their boats gave warning to the fishermen of weather to come, a few men gathered in the Cresset Inn, in the lower town, on St. Agnes, one of the smaller of the five inhabited isles.

From the inn's small-paned windows could be seen the rising swell moving up the Broad Sound. To the west-southwestward the Hellweathers spouted foam.

The Scillies and the low black, foam-fringed ledges of granite, the Western Rocks, that stretch like hungry fangs into the Atlantic beyond, are not a graveyard of ships. In a graveyard men and ships may rest quietly beneath sod or water, after the travail of living. But among the tide-scoured, tempest-whipped shallows and channels of the Westerns no ship ever rested long above or below the waves. No graveyard, this, but a veritable mill of the gods, and no mill grinds more exceeding fine.

The men in the bar turned their backs to the windows as the graying dusk shrouded the charging sea. A storm was no spectacle, but a living menace to the two thousand Scillonians dwelling on five of the forty islets and innumerable rocks. Their water-girt world facing a sweep of three thousand miles of the Atlantic is at its broadest from Bishop Light to Hard Lewis, a scant ten miles. Their roads are roadsteads and their food is fish. A gale of wind has real significance there.

A heavy boot thudded suddenly against the door of the Cresset Inn, and it swung open with a crash. Into the room, yellow oilskins glinting wet, strode a tall man, quick moving, who took in the group at a glance.

"Ho, idlers!" he cried with a roaring laugh, "an' why aren't the lot of 'ee out 'mong the ledges? The pollack are bitin'."

He snatched off his sou'wester and snapped the water from it with a twist of his wrist. The movement revealed his head covered with a mop of hair nearer sandy than red and somewhat disheveled. His features, large, were regular enough to be considered handsome.

The men, who had looked around at the noise he made, gave him quiet greeting or nods, and looked at him rather carefully to ascertain whether he was drunk or merely in high spirits. This dashing Cornishman, Hugh Dallgen by name, was little understood by sober Scillonians.

Dallgen strode to the bar. Room was made for him.

"Whisky!" he said to the barmaid, the daughter of the innkeeper. With quick, bold eyes he looked over the company once more and then turned to the old man beside him, Uncle Frank Worsall.

"A beautiful night for God's grace, as the old 'uns called a shipwreck, eh, Uncle?" he said. "A night like this, comin' thick an' wild together, poured many a cargo into the arms o' Scilly men." He guffawed again and elbowed the old fisherman. "An' they do say 'twas so mortal hard to keep the light burnin' at St. Agnes, here, that it went out often when 'twas needed most at sea."

"Yarns, yarns!" retorted Uncle Frank stoutly. "They do say all manner of things, but the truth o't be farther off than France."

"But that be not so far off but that a seaman o' courage may get a drop o' brandy off a French fisherman now an' then," the tall Cornishman maintained, with a wink at the silent barmaid. "Warmin' stuff, that, an' so cheap as beer is here."

No one answered him. Dallgen lifted his glass, drank and smacked it on the bar again.

"A seaman o' courage," he repeated complacently. "'Tis my kind that dares a gale like this that's comin' on. Eleven hours an' forty minutes I made it—from Mount's Bay to St. Mary's Sound—an' naught but a bit o' bread an' meat an' a swig o' brandy now an' then to sustain me. An' off Land's End I see what was brewin' in the sou'west, but on I came, tackin' close-hauled in the teeth o't, an' all alone. When I sets off from Cornwall for the Scillies, the Scillies I make, come what will."

"'Twould be worth seein', if 'ee'd started tomorrow, 'stead o' today," remarked Uncle Frank dryly. The other fishermen chuckled and listened for a moment to the wind in the chimney.

Dallgen scowled.

"Scilly men ha' reason to admire my skill," he answered. "Was it not I alone, wi' my standin' lug rig, as saved the lives o' Ann Trevore's father an' uncle? Driftin' helpless they were, in half a gale, wi' a rock through the bottom o' their gig an' the water comin' in faster nor they could throw 'en out. An' I—"

"Us ha' heard it all afore," interrupted Uncle Frank emphatically.

Dallgen scowled again, returning to his glass.

"A good deed's worth repeatin'," he declared.

"Think 'ee us would not ha' done the same?" inquired Uncle Frank. "Jim Garth would ha' been 'longside afore 'ee, I'll lay."

"Jim Garth!" flared Dallgen. "That wooden man! Him!"

"Aye, him, if he'd been nigh," replied another man. "The lad ull give 'ee a tow to windward in any breeze. Ask Ann if he won't."

Dallgen sneered.

"What's Ann Trevore to say for that lout? More whisky!"

The door opened again, quietly, and a man came in hastily, bringing a gust of wind and a douse of rain with him.

"Here's the lad himself," Uncle Frank said, as the newcomer turned his back to shut the door tightly against the gale.

The Cornishman glowered at the man, a sturdy, brown-haired islander, and then at the fisherman who had praised his seamanship. He remained silent, brooding over the remark with bent head.

"Back fra Cornwall, eh, Hugh?" said Garth as greeting. He advanced wearily to the bar. "Glass o' spirits, please. I'm needin' it."

"'Ee look so!" exclaimed Uncle Frank, peering at the pallid face, shivering body and soggy clothes of the young fisherman. "Did 'ee come to grief some way?"

"Come close to grief," replied Jim Garth briefly. He drank, then seeing his fellows expectant, went on:

"Out for a last pull at the lobster pots afore the storm broke bad, under jib an' mizzen. A squall came down on me, snapped the string o' pots, half buried the boat an' a foul time an' a long I had o' saving all."

Hugh Dallgen laughed scornfully.

"The man's afeared o' losin' a pot!" he jeered "I'll lay 'un won't try a run again' me. Seaman! Him!"

"Jim's losin' no pots these days," said Uncle Frank amiably. "The money's needed. 'Twould be puttin' him further off from Ann to lose pots."

"An' who's sayin' Ann be wantin' a lubber like him near?" asked Dallgen hotly. "I'm thinkin' 'twould be more fittin' her ud delight in havin' I near—the man as saved her father an' uncle."

Jim Garth, who had been looking perplexedly at the hostile Cornishman, slowly set down his glass. Among the islands Dallgen had a reputation as a philandering, dashing fellow, but his interest in Ann Trevore was something new and startling.

"By the look o'—" began Uncle Frank, but Jim Garth interrupted.

"I'm sayin' Ann wants me near," he said, his gray eyes unmovingly on the eyes of the fisherman from Cornwall.

Dallgen greeted this with a glittering smile, and beckoned to the barmaid to fill his glass.

"Strange be the way o' women, then," he said.

Walking suddenly to the little window, he peered out at the darkening scene. The window rattled in the sash as he stood there. His keen eyes could make out but little in the quick-come blackness, save that the storm was increasing in violence.

"He give I a tow!" he muttered angrily, and suddenly whirled on Garth. "I'll take 'ee passenger in my boat this night to Porth Loo Bay, Jim Garth," he challenged. "Us'll make a double visit to Ann Trevore an' I'll learn 'ee sailin' on the way."

Jim Garth shook his head.

"Her'd not thank me for bringin' to her door a man wi' too much spirits in him."

"Call I drunk?" exclaimed Dallgen, taking a threatening stride toward the shorter man. "Well, then, drunk or sober, I call I a better man—in a boat or out."

"Many things 'ee call yoursel', an' few on 'en be true, Hugh Dallgen," Uncle Frank interposed with dignity. He stepped between the two men. "I've seen 'ee do wild things in a boat an' come to no harm. Drunk, 'ee can't be drowned. But Jim here be the better man ashore or afloat, an' us will all maintain it."

Dallgen ignored this.

"Come out, Jim Garth," he invited mockingly. "There's a proper wind for sailin' outside an' I'll teach 'ee much. If 'ee has the makin's o' a man an' seaman 'ee will not refuse I the boon o' your company."

Jim Garth's eyes glinted angrily as he faced the big Cornishman.

"The sea be no thing to tempt idly on a night so bad as this, an' a man as earns his bread on it should know so," he said sternly. "Well 'ee know I was never behind 'ee when fish were to be pulled in at a risk."

This awoke anew the rankling of the taunt that Jim Garth could outsail him, a taunt more bitterly exasperating to Hugh Dallgen than any other could be.

"The man that feels so sure o' weddin' a maid so fair as Ann Trevore should be worthy o' she," he persisted.

He strode to the door and flung it open. The wind rushed in with chilling breath.

The red glowing turf in the fire burst into flame.

"Come on, Jim Garth, prove yoursel' a man or gi' over the maid to me," Dallgen demanded.

Garth took three quick strides toward his tormentor.

"I tell 'ee I'll not risk my life for the whim o' a drunkard," he said steadily, though his reddened face revealed mounting anger. "If that be unworthiness then call it so to my face an' —— to 'ee. Shut that door!"

The rush of the wind had set the paraffin lamps to flickering and smoking, and the night seemed to come into the room with the wind and the rain. Jim Garth extended a firm hand toward the door, the knob of which Hugh Dallgen still gripped tightly.

Suddenly, before either man could do more, the blackness of the storm outside was cut by a ghastly green glare. It colored the scudding clouds above and the angry sea below with the same unnatural tint and threw a virescent light upon the men and the floor beneath them. At that moment the whole world had a weird green hue.

"A rocket!" exclaimed Jim Garth. The flare died away as suddenly as it had come. The Scillonian stepped outside the door, staring out toward the Western Rocks whence the light had seemed to come.

"Aye, a rocket," Hugh Dallgen repeated, and suddenly his voice became sharp, jeering. "Now, Jim Garth, now! Will 'ee risk the sea this night to save humans, if not for a drunkard's whim? There's a ship to wind'ard—maybe on th' rocks; maybe in need o' a pilot to draw her away from the ledges. Now—"

Jim Garth fastened his oilskins against the gale.

"I'll go with 'ee," he said curtly. "Come!"

Hugh Dallgen raised a big hand to thump Garth's shoulder, but the Scillonian stepped away from him.

"God's grace!" exulted the big Cornishman. "Souls to save or a cargo to salve! There's more profit in cargo, so let's pray 'tis truly God's gr—"

The wind swept the sound of his voice from the men rushing from the inn. Dallgen ceased to speak as he ran after Jim Garth, who was already making speed toward Porthconger harbor.

Dallgen's undecked fishing boat was riding uneasily to anchor in the lee of the heights. Dallgen was first aboard and leaped to the halyards in the darkness as if it had been broad daylight. He had the mainsail up before Jim Garth, moving more slowly in the unfamiliar boat, had raised the mizzen.

"Full sail!" Dallgen shouted, as he swigged up taut the mainsail. "No 'frighted jib-an'-mizzen sailin' for I."

"'Ud made better speed an' ship less water thereby," Jim Garth murmured to himself, but he said no word to the Cornishman. Well he knew the etiquette of the sea.

Garth went forward to haul up the anchor while Dallgen leaped to the tiller. An instant later the little boat was away, sails flapping now and filling then, as it struggled out of the lee of the island. A sudden sweep of wind took her sails and threatened to lay her flat on the water, but Dallgen luffed swiftly, and the boat, now almost in the strength of the gale, spilled the puff in time. Then, as the sails filled again, she leaped ahead. The water boiled in front of her unlovely bow; she lay over on the water again. Jim Garth, in the bottom of the boat, skilfully struck a match and put the shielded flame to the wick of the lantern. Then silently he took his seat on a thwart aft with the bailer in his hands.

There had been, in all this time, no other rocket. That one transient glare of green was all the clue they had to a ship among the Western Rocks, which stretched to windward over an area of treacherous water four miles square.

Though the boat was clear of St. Agnes now, Annet, home of the cormorant and sea-gull, still interposed its half-mile length to the gale and broke the force of the waves that rolled up Broad Sound.

The boat was running almost northwest to clear this, the last island to seaward. Dallgen, nodding toward it, bellowed—

"Outside o' that we'll get 'un, and maybe a glance o' a light to guide us!"

Jim Garth was silent, his keen eyes conning the welter of water. The glimpses of islands and rocks told him their position and the depth of water under their keel. They were going into the wildest waste of granite pinnacles and granite ledges that ever man sailed among, and going in the teeth of a wind that was mounting in force steadily. The breeze and the sea it raised was not too dangerous, as yet. It was what was to come that made their venture perilous.

Though Hugh Dallgen knew the Western Rocks as well as a Scillonian fisherman, Jim Garth was not leaving the piloting to him. No man, not even a Scillonian, knew all the rocks and all the deep water of that marine maze of death, but Jim Garth knew more than most.

The boat heeled over more violently, and a wave, and then another, slapped her bow to leeward. Dallgen luffed again, but more than a sup of water sloshed about in her bottom before she came up. Silently Jim Garth began bailing her out.

"Let it be, man!" the Cornishman jeered. "There'll be more'n that in her in a minute. We're out o' all shelter now."

Garth methodically finished his bailing, skillfully using the rapid pitch and scend of the boat to fill his bailer as the unbroken combers of the Atlantic had their will with her. The waves crested but did not break; the water here was much too deep for surf in this wind. Dallgen, roaring a music-hall ditty, brought the boat closer to the wind, until it seemed that they were flying into it.

Staring ahead under his streaming sou'wester, Jim Garth could see no light, not even the flash of the Bishop, the great light tower that is the landfall of ships from the new world. They were now not three miles from it, and its light should show eighteen miles around.

"Thick!" he muttered. "Ah!"

The boat had caught a puff as she rose to the top of a swell, and her leeward gunwale went under. Dallgen, pushing on the tiller, swung her into the wind. With sails flapping like the angry wings of giant birds, the boat lost all headway. She slid down a huge wave, and then as her stubby bowsprit well nigh pierced the trough, she was flung up again. A vagrant surge assailed her starboard bow. The boat's head was knocked off to port, and she filled away.

"Good enough!" Dallgen shouted with raddled merriment. "'Un wants we to take the port tack. 'Tis no worse than t'other."

"'Ware o' Annet!" Jim Garth warned, with a glance at the loom of the island of sea-birds, close a-lee.

But Dallgen laughed again and held the straining boat close-hauled, careless of the fact that another luff into the wind's eye would put them on the rocks before he could regain control. His luck held good. The heavy boat clawed away from the island into deep water. The Western Rocks were dead ahead now, Annet and the Hellweathers well a-lee.

Jim Garth crawled forward along the windward gunwale to the mainmast and stood up, clinging to the groaning spar and staring into the wild blackness ahead. Out of it stinging spray and a wind that in the puffs seemed almost as dense as water attacked him, but with it came no gleam of light. A roaring thunder in his ears told of the conflict between the raging Atlantic and that staunch granite barrier that had opposed it throughout the ages.

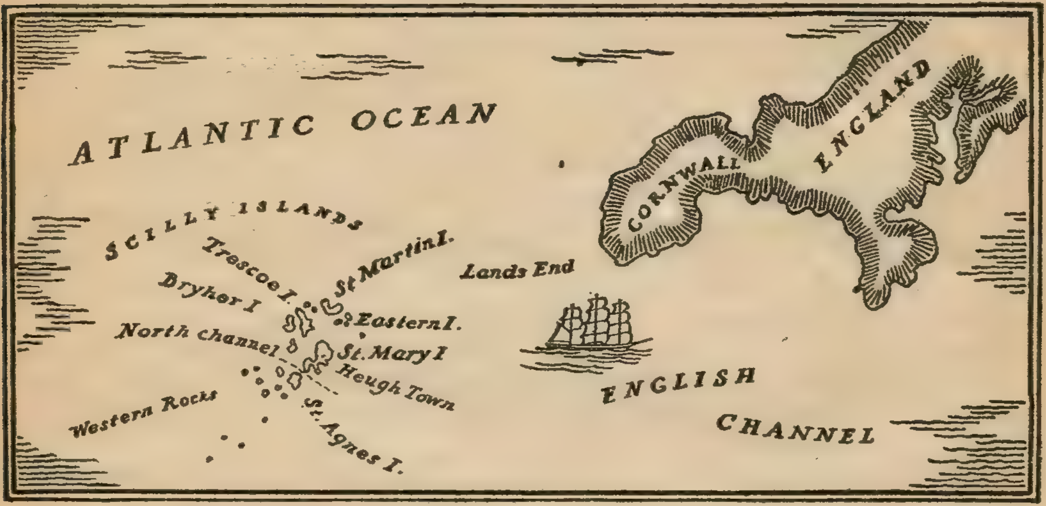
Here and there, on the unseen surface of the sea, a wave-top blew off with a sudden spread of foam that made the surging water visible for an instant, and then vanished without a trace remaining. But strain his streaming eyes as he would, the fisherman could see nothing that hinted of human beings drawn helpless into that Titan, age-old battle between sea and rocks.

The open boat fought on; the booming

of the surf grew louder. Jim Garth was glancing to port now, and suddenly he turned and shouted through funneled hands at the man at the helm.

"Gorregan ahead. Go about!"

How he knew that the rapidly increasing thunder of the surf meant that it was Gorregan and not another of the deadly chain that menaced them, he could not tell. Certainly it was not a matter of vision, for save that a ghostly whiteness due to the frothing remnants of great shattered waves now covered the sea, there was no clue for his eyes. To an uncanny sense of direction and speed, to the unconscious weighing of the volume of sound that echoed in his ears from starboard, to a mysterious something in his brain must be credited that wisdom, but it saved them.



Dallgen swung the tiller, and the plunging boat reeled to starboard. Garth ducked under the mainsail and took his place on the other side.

"Keep 'en on the beam!" he shouted, and Dallgen again obeyed.

The boat was flying now. In an instant they were out of the poor lee of Gorregan and in the seaway beyond. If the wind increased now, the boat, under its full spread of canvas, could not live. Eased off by Dallgen, she struggled on across the gap, riding the waves until she reached the partial shelter of the next great rock in the Western chain. So, flung high in the air or deep in the trough one minute, floundering in a confused sea the next, the boat fought on. And nowhere was there sign of ship.

Rosvear, Rosvean, Jacky's Rock, Pond's Brow, Great Crawbewethan, all passed abeam, and still Jim Garth stared fruitlessly into the murk. Nothing.

As they passed the last island and stood out across Broad Sound, the wind lulled perceptibly. Jim Garth turned distrustfully toward the southwest. To him the abatement was merely a portent of worse to come.

He made his way aft in the plunging boat. Dallgen, gripping the tiller with his right hand, was lowering a flask from his lips with the other. He waved it before Jim Garth's disapproving eyes and shouted at him:

"An' how do 'ee like sailin' wi' I, man? Think 'ee could handle a boat in this?"

"Aye, an' worse," retorted Garth. "An' there may be need yet. The wind's comin' harder soon; no man nor boat will take it then."

" 'Ee want to go back!" Dallgen taunted. " 'Tis not so easy to act the man 'mong the Westerns. Take courage, man! Ann will not have 'ee if 'ee don't."

But Garth was not listening. He had

turned to stare ahead and, suddenly, as the boat hung on a way and then plunged downward, he clutched Dallgen's arm.

"A starboard light!" he shouted in the Cornishman's ear. "On the starboard bow. Wait!"

He held his grip on Dallgen's arm until the next great wave got under their keel. Then, as they rose, he pointed, but no glimmer of green came to their eyes.

"Keep the wind on the beam," he said, and lifted the lantern to swing it in the lessened wind.

Through successive surges they struggled on. The great waves that went under them were much too broad to roll them on their beam end, but even during this interval of the storm at every rise Dallgen was obliged to let go the main sheet and spill the wind from the big mainsail.

"The Gunners!" Jim Garth shouted, pointing again into the gloom ahead. "Her's on the Gunners!"

"I saw the gleam!" Dallgen roared back. "Her'll not live there long an' the wind picks up."

The boat lunged on, while Jim Garth bailed her out against the time when they entered the rougher water around the projecting rocks.

Suddenly a darker gloom than the fretted water rose ahead of them. Then, in the faint light of the froth on the hissing sea, they made her out—a great three-master, a bark, lying high on the rocks, with a slight list to port, and with her starboard light, still burning dimly, sending a gleam toward the storm-swept, invisible sky.

Hugh Dallgen hailed strongly as they swept by to leeward and Jim Garth waved high the lantern. With straining ears they listened, but no answer came back and no light save that green tinge showed on the great craft. They could make out now that before she took the rocks her bow had been stove in above the water-line and her bowsprit, broken off, trailed by its cordage in the water near them. The waves, surging on the rocks on the other side of the wreck, were repelled, and swirled around either end of the great ship with power broken.

"Make fast to 'en," Hugh Dallgen shouted, as he rounded into the wind. Jim Garth jumped forward and grabbed at a mass of wreckage.

"Deep water here," he told the Cornishman. "I'll haul 'en 'longside the spar. Us'll be safer there than dancin' 'roundabout wi' maybe a timber piercin' our planks."

Slowly they pushed through the tangle of cordage until the great bow of the bark loomed above them. The vessel had been swept almost over the ledge, and her bow overhung it. Hugh Dallgen stared up at the ship and hailed again. No answer came.

"I'm goin' aboard," he announced suddenly. "High an' dry, her is, save the stern, wi' the tide fallen away to ebb an' my boat in little danger while the lull's on. Will 'ee go wi' me, trembler?"

Jim Garth ignored the unjust taunt. " 'Tis what I came for," he answered shortly.

Catching hold of one of the ropes that the splintered bowsprit had carried overboard with it, he tested it by a vigorous haul and, hand over hand, pulled himself from the small boat to the bow of the wreck. Dallgen watched him go in silence. Then he bent and picked up the brandy flask.

"A fine 'un, him, to wed a maid so pretty as Ann," he muttered darkly. "An' yet 'en goes afore me like 'en were master o' this boat. A cocky dog, for sure."

A light line swished through the air and dropped upon the boat.

"We'll need the lantern, p'rhaps," Jim Garth hailed. "Make fast an' I'll haul up."

Dallgen uttered an oath, but tied on the feeble light and followed up the rope. At the rail he halted and, instead of climbing aboard, seized the lantern and lowered it again to the painted name on the bow.

"*Bride o' the Sea,* her name," he shouted to Jim Garth, "an' here's a beauteous figurehead to prove it. 'Bride o' the Rocks,' she is tonight."

"Come aboard!" said Jim impatiently. "Deserted her is, most like, but we'd best take a look. There's a feel in the night that the storm will be down on we soon again, an' triple fold."

But the tall Cornishman did not come at once. In the feeble light of the lantern he was staring at the carved figure of a beautiful maiden, her eyes fixed on something ahead, far beyond the broken bowsprit.

"Come on, man!" Jim Garth called impatiently. "There's a creepy feel on this ship, an' I'd ha' done wi' her. Can't 'ee feel her quiver at every sea?"

Dallgen clumsily climbed over the rail.

"*Bride o' the Sea!*" he muttered. "A strange name for a ship, that. An' a beautiful figurehead that—a white maiden wi' a face like an angel an' a form—like a woman!"

Jim Garth snatched the lantern from him.

"Us are here to save life, not to con figureheads," he rebuked. He braced himself as another sea thudded against her stern; then, throwing the light on the sloping deck, he made his way aft. Dallgen moved as far as the foremast, muttering to himself. On his return Jim Garth found him there.

"Nothin'," reported the Scillonian. "Boats gone from davits. Belike they'd heard o' the savagery o' the Western Rocks, an' trusted to boats when the roar o' the Westerns came to their ears. Taken aback, she were, an' sprung her masts, by the look o' things."

He bent and picked up an ax sticking in the deck by the foremast.

"Standin' by to cut, they was," he said.

Dallgen looked at the ax with quick interest.

"Deserted," he muttered. "'Un thought the sea were a-comin' aboard to claim its bride. Well, the sea'll not have her. Gi' me that ax."

Garth passed it over mechanically, his gaze aloft.

"Wind's comin'," he said with conviction. "Us'll have spars about our ears or through the boat soon. 'Tis time to leave her—there's no human aboard."

"No human aboard," Dallgen mumbled, and walked quickly forward. Garth followed, but halted suddenly as the sound of blows came back to him. And to him, there in the darkness which mocked the feeble lantern, the ship seemed to shudder underfoot at every blow.

"Dallgen!" he called, raising the light.

He made out that the tall Cornishman was up in the forepeak, leaning over and dealing mighty ax strokes at the figurehead. He paid no attention to Garth's shouts. The Scillonian moved forward and laid a hand on the other's shoulder.

"Man, what are 'ee doin'?" he demanded.

Dallgen shook off the hand, but paused to inspect his work.

"*Bride o' the Sea!*" he muttered. "Not this maid. I'm takin' her mysel' till I get some one better."

Garth held the light so he could see the strange, rapt face of the toiling man as he raised his ax again. The Cornishman's lips began moving in a continuous, secret flow of words and his eyes were fixed and glaring. He gave no heed either to the lantern or to Garth.

"Leave it be, man," Jim Garth said uneasily. "The thing's bewitched 'ee."

The big man, mumbling on, snatched a coil of rope. One end of this he passed around the slender waist of the white maiden and made it fast. The figurehead now was almost severed from the ship.

Glancing around, Dallgen's eyes lighted upon Garth.

"Tail on to that wi' I," he ordered, tossing him the bight of the rope. "A strong haul an' she's mine."

"The spirits ha' gone to your brain, Hugh," the Scillonian demurred. "Leave it be—there's no luck in wrestin' a figurehead from a ship that's not breakin' up. 'Tis a wisht thing, man—too much like pluckin' a livin' heart from a man's breast."

"The sea'll take his bride an' I do not," Dallgen said stubbornly. "I'll take her, I tell 'ee—till I get somethin' better—Ann perhaps."

Jim Garth frowned at the name of Ann on the crazed man's lips.

"Come!" he urged, and looked uneasily into the blackness to windward.

Dallgen braced himself on the sloping deck and swayed with the rope. There was a sharp crack. The figurehead broke loose and fell to the rope's length over the side.

The Cornishman uttered a cry of triumph.

"A figurehead for my boat till I gets I a wife for my house!" he roared. "Hold the rope, Jim, till I get down and take she aboard."

Unwillingly Jim Garth took the rope that Dallgen pressed into his hands, and snubbed it against the rail. No good would come of opposing too strongly a man in Dallgen's condition.

"There's no luck in this," he protested. "Come daylight an' a clear head an' 'ee'll know it. A figurehead washed ashore is well an' good—the Tresco garden's full o' 'en—but not cut out o' a livin' ship."

Dallgen passed behind him, muttering unintelligibly in the wind that now was rising in successive, strengthening puffs.

"No!" he said suddenly in Garth's ear. "Ship must ha' a figurehead, eh? All right, her'll have 'en!"

A rope whipped suddenly about Jim Garth's neck and tightened; then wound, quick as a coiling snake, around his shoulders. Letting the figurehead splash into the water, he reached upward. But already he was strangling, and his hands first must release the pressure on his throat.

And as he strove for breath Dallgen's long arms, lightning quick, were twisting rope about him as a spider overwhelms a fly. Within a minute he was down on the deck, bound from head to feet, with his arms doubled up on his chest, fighting for breath against the stricture of the cord about his throat.

Dallgen, his eyes savage in the feeble light of the smoking lantern, left Garth an instant to make fast the rope that dangled over the rail and held the carven effigy. Then he turned back to his captive.

Jim Garth, motionless now that he had tested the strength of his bonds, stared up at Dallgen with a gaze in which there was more fascinated horror than fear.

"Figurehead, eh?" Dallgen shouted again, bending and lifting the other man to his shoulder with a convulsive effort. "I'll gi' the ship a proper figurehead—a livin' one, for a livin' ship. 'Groom o' the Sea—not Bride.' Listen!"

He stopped, gripping the man he carried with bent, claw-like fingers. To them both, above the steady roar of the breaking seas, came the warning whistle of the increasing wind cutting its way through the cordage above them.

"Here 'en comes—the sea, runnin' wi' wind an' tide to claim her groom. No man, the sea—no man—but a woman comin' to claim a husband!" The demented man laughed, almost shrilly, at his gruesome idea. "Plenty her's claimed 'round here—as well 'ee know, Jim Garth. But none has her claimed, as her'll claim 'ee."

He carried the unspeaking Scillonian to the forepeak, and up with cat-like, certain tread, to the stump of the bowsprit. There he bound him with new fetters to the huge spar, so that he depended over the shattered bow.

"Now, figurehead, die wi' your ship!" he mocked, stepping back to the deck. A wave, running up the incline, swirled around his boots and rippled back again as he looked down. "Ha! 'Twill not be long, wi' tide, wind an' sea on the rise. An' know, lump o' carven wood, that the maid Ann 'ee counted on for bride will come to Cornwall wi' me in the first fair weather. Think 'ee I ha' no claim on she—I, that saved her father from the sea? Saved father an' sunk lover! Claim eno', that."

Jim Garth, twisting his head to give his throat relief, spoke hoarsely.

"If this be a joke, ha' it over, Hugh Dallgen, for 'tis a poor one, an' the wild gale's a'most on us. If 'tisn't, then be —— to 'ee, and I'll die knowin' Ann will never have 'ee, for all your blat."

"Ah, will she not!" Dallgen exulted. "Man, I'll make a hero of 'ee—praise 'ee to the sky an' tell she how bold 'ee died, till her'll love me for't. Soon her'll see that with 'ee dead, 'twas best to take your friend Hugh, that saved her father an' her uncle fro' the sea."

Jim Garth groaned, and with his trussed hands wrested at the rope about his neck. He did not speak again. Dallgen, gabbling and chuckling to himself, said no intelligible word. Taking the lantern, he lowered it and himself to the boat. Garth, listening in the dark, heard a thump as the Cornishman hauled the figurehead aboard his boat.

Another wave, greater than the one that had warned Dallgen to be off, broke on the deck, and Jim Garth felt the trembling ship rise and drop again on to the rocks. With an autumn tide of twenty-five or thirty feet it would not be long before the rising strength of the savage sea was beating this frail ship upon the anvil of the rocks.

The pressure of the rope about his throat was still severe, though his fettered fingers and twisting head had been able to relieve it somewhat. Now he devoted himself desperately to the task of taking up the slack in the coils about his shoulders, upon which, with elbows, wrists and fingers, he was able to exert some influence. Slowly he worked this slack into one coil, that throttling coil about his throat. Each fraction of an inch he hoarded.

He had little hope, but it was something to do, and a Scillonian does not surrender easily to the sea, that ancient friend and enemy of his race.

Every tug that enlarged the upper turn of the rope tightened the turns that already constricted his arms and fingers. Was he robbing himself of all chance of liberty in this effort to work that turn from neck to chin? He did not know; it seemed probable, but he persevered.

With his chin tight down against his throat he made his forlorn struggle. Heedless of the sting of salt water against his lacerated skin he forced the loosened rope upward, until finally it met his teeth. Like a hungry shark he bit into one of the three stout strands whose windings made the rope.

Below him the lantern still glimmered in Hugh Dallgen's small boat. He could catch a glimpse of confused movements, as the Cornishman worked to free his boat from the rigging of the fallen bowsprit. He could see, too, the dim yellow light glinting on the carved head of the Bride's effigy, which projected forward beyond the fishing boat's bow.

Jim bit and gnawed at the rope fiercely, unheeding the exultant Cornishman's occasional shouts and laughter that rose above even the shriek of the wind, the boom of breaking seas, and the crash of the ship on the rocks. The rising seas, breaking over the stern of the ship or swirling around rocks and wreck alike, were hindering Dallgen in his task of getting away. His knife was flashing as he cut now at a tentacle of the wreck that jammed his rudder.

The sight of the knife reminded Garth of his own, but it was in his pocket and his arms were doubled up, elbows bent and forearms flat against his chest. In his blind fury Dallgen had not erred. There was nothing to do but close his teeth in the stout rope and tear from it, fiber after fiber.

And meanwhile, with crushing vehemence, the sea was falling upon the ship. Buoying her up one instant, the treacherous waves receded the next, and left her hanging in air above the granite. Then down she came. Certainly planking could not stand that pounding long, and timbers but little longer.

The light of the lantern was no longer almost below Jim. The Cornishman had cut his boat free from the raffle and now was working it through, toward the deep, clear water beyond. And the seas were not yet too high for a light boat, running before them, to scud in safety.

Garth was exerting the strength of his

almost helpless wrists and fingers to draw the slack of the turns upward toward his head, but he found that his previous efforts had well nigh exhausted the play in the bonds. His teeth had made little headway against the thick rope.

Suddenly the ship beneath him surged high in the air. He could feel the swift movement as she lifted. And then came a rush of water, white and hissing, that enveloped him. Tensed, mouth tight closed, he waited for the water to recede. Ages passed, and still the smothering torment swirled around him. And then, with a thunderous thud, the vessel struck, and seemed to fling the waves upon her back into the sea.

Jim breathed again. Dimly he noticed that the yellow lantern light was farther off now—well beyond the wreckage. Dallgen had gotten away, had left him to drown without a chance for a struggle against death. He had fled down wind toward safety—and Ann.

The thought maddened him. Another great wave leaped up the deck and over him. From below the sea rose to join it. He would not die this way! Half choked by the stinging brine that forced itself into eyes and nostrils, half crazy with the thought of death for him, and Ann for Dallgen, he writhed in his bonds. It was a convulsive movement more powerful than any voluntary muscular action could have been. With his fingers he pressed upward at the hateful strand upon which he had been gnawing.

The single, superhuman effort did more than his minutes of hard work had done. He felt the rope scraping against his nostrils, and he thrust his head down. The rope was pressed against his closed eyes now. The stricture of his hands was greater, but his twisting head was working the turn upward. Suddenly it slid over his hair, and the tightness of the turns about hand and chest relaxed.

At the same moment his body emerged with the stub of the bowsprit from the sea. Jim instinctively braced himself for the crash of the ship on the rocks beneath as the waves receded, a crash that might strew the well knit ship in fragments over the surface of the water. None came.

Bewildered, he stared about. The blackness gave no clue to why the blow was withheld. Then, suddenly, he felt the slow, heavy pitch of a laboring ship, and realized what had happened. Those last two charges of the sea had flung the stranded ship clear up over the rocks, into the deep water beyond. She was adrift, driven before the wind and waves up the Broad Sound toward other outlying rocks, toward the Isles themselves.

But, for all that he was on a sinking derelict drifting to doom, Jim Garth felt the lightness of hope in his breast. He had freed himself of one turn of his bonds. His body already was looser in the other coils; almost he could get a hand free.

The water roared sullenly along under the bark's fore-foot, and then the roar died into a confused gurgle as the ship scended and dipped her shattered bows beneath the surface. Her movement was not that of a light ship running free. Jim realized that her heavy movements meant that because of open bow and doubtless splintered planking her minutes were numbered. But, though she was half full of water, she was moving on at a rate that awed Jim. She seemed a sentient thing fleeing from her enemy—or was she rushing on to fling herself on some pinnacle of rock and end her existence? Jim could not know; but his scalp tingled and he forgot his own peril for the moment. Where was this wounded thing, raped of her figurehead, bearing him?

He now pulled another turn over his head; his right hand was released. Between the coils of rope the hand felt its way into his pocket and drew forth the knife that would make him an unfettered man again, even though he were doomed.

He cut turn after turn of the rope that bound him, following its convolutions down his body and taking care not to cut, at the same time, that other rope with which the mad Cornishman had bound him to the bowsprit.

Then, winding his legs tight around the big spar and clinging with his left hand, he slashed this rope. He was free!

Exhausted, he lay stretched along the bowsprit. Slowly he recovered from the struggle. As steadily as if some ghostly quartermaster, given up by the sea, held her rudder amidships, the ship lunged on through the blackness upon her self-appointed course. How could a vessel so low in the water make her speed? Jim Garth realized vaguely that she must be storming along up the Broad Sound, and wondered again what was to be her fate, and his. Would it be Lanjeffrey Rocks, the Southward Wells Ledge, Minalto or the Isle of Samson itself? Or would the Old Wreck Ledge, on the other side of the Sound, Woodcock's Ledge or one of the rocky shoulders of St. Mary's take her bones?

Clinging to the spar, he stared ahead, hoping to see through the murk and spray some light, or cluster of lights, or loom of rock or island, that would tell him where he was. The swash of an occasional sea along the deck told him that she was being pooped continually by the seas that swept her on. That meant a wall of water would sweep him from her wheel if he ventured aft to try to direct her course. He could do nothing but wait, to see where this masterless ship was carrying him.

Out of the black water ahead a glimmer arose. Jim Garth, eyes protruding, saw it and doubted his eyes. Now it was almost below him and he realized what it was.

The feeble light showed him Dallgen's boat, bow toward the battered, onrushing bow of the bark. The beautiful figurehead which the Cornishman had placed at the prow seemed illumined by a light of its own rather than by the rays of the smoking lantern. The carved figure projected toward Garth with upraised arms, as if seeking once again its place under the bowsprit of the *Bride of the Sea*.

Jim gasped. Those outstretched arms seemed living, appealing to him for succor. So compelling was the sight that his eyes dwelt hardly an instant upon the mainmast of the fishing boat, which had snapped off just above the butt and now trailed over the side.

The vision held for just an iota of time. Then Hugh Dallgen, glaring upward with wild fury in his eyes, charged forward, knife in hand. His mouth framed oaths unheard in the gale. As the stem of the onrushing bark bore down upon his boat Dallgen leaped upward from its gunwale.

His knife cut through Garth's oilskins, grazed his side and drove deep into the spar. Dallgen's wet fingers slipped from the handle. As he fell back into the sea his clutching left hand closed upon Jim Garth's ankle and plucked him from his place on the bowsprit.

Down into the roaring water in front of the ship the two men plunged. The bark, rising from the destruction of the fishing boat, tramped them under, too. Down they sank, and deeper still, locked in a fierce embrace.

Out of the confusion of the black world of water into which he had been dragged one vivid impression came to Jim Garth. It was that Hugh Dallgen's fingers were feeling, feeling for his stinging throat. Now they closed upon it, with frenzied strength, as the rope had closed upon it before.

In the quiet Scillonian the primal wrath of his sea-harried, unconquerable ancestors kindled. Savage exultation rose in his breast. Drowning though he was, feet or fathoms below the bark, he was no trussed victim now. Here things were equal. Dallgen, too, was drowning, and in his mad despair was seeking to kill Garth before he died. Garth's own right hand shot out and grasped his enemy's windpipe.

The deep, chill waters below the cresting seas stirred to their struggle. With the water singing in their ears they grappled, and even as the bitter salt crept at last through nostrils and down constricted throats the two men forced strong, closing fingers tighter and tighter. And Jim Garth, fighting off unconsciousness and clinging to the torture of existence for his unwavering purpose, felt his stronger hand squeeze madness out of Hugh Dallgen. He felt Hugh's fingers about his throat relax and come away, but he pressed on, pressing into the strangling Hugh the fear of death. Finally he felt the man go limp against him.

Then only did that deadly game lose its savor. Wavering between a confused torment of feeling and a sweet, beckoning blankness, Jim shifted his hand to Dallgen's shirt and with the other groped upward. Something hard, unyielding, came within grasp of his arm and he clung to it, and vaguely felt that he breathed again.

TO HUGH DALLGEN, out of a deep unknowingness came a sensation of cold and pain, faint at first, but rising to the pitch of anguish. He moaned and moved feebly, as if to return to that unhurting blackness from which he was emerging. At last he raised his aching head slowly, and his hand strayed up to his throat to quench the fire there.

His eyelids parted and he looked. Vaguely he realized that he was lying upon a sandy beach. The angry red light of a new day shone upon it, and finally revealed to him the white-capped waves of the roadstead, and across the waters the familiar stretch of Porth Loo Bay. Then he became aware of something nearer, and he looked upward.

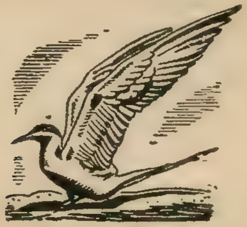
Jim Garth, with face drained white and eyes bloodshot, stood, swaying, above him. Upon his haggard countenance there was a twisted, contemptuous smile.

"Welcome back fra' ——!" he said hoarsely.

"What—" Dallgen mumbled, and then he remembered, in a rush, the iron clutch of fingers on his throat, his own right hand relaxing, groping imploringly upon that rigid grip, and then—nothing. Quickly he looked down—away from those weary, victorious eyes—at the wet sand. There beside him he saw the carved wooden figurehead of the *Bride of the Sea*.

Jim Garth laughed, a grating, painful sound.

" 'Ee wanted that; I'll gi' it to 'ee!" he said. "Her saved both our lives, Hugh Dallgen, but I—" he looked across the raging seas to the snug harbor of Porth Loo—"ha' another woman that's not o' wood."



The Capture of Douamont

BY LEONARD H. NASON

VERDUN was what used to be the perfect type of ring fortress. The city itself was surrounded by a strong high wall. It was equipped with an impregnable citadel, and around the entire city at a distance of a few miles was a circle of forts. Verdun was thus fortified, because at that time the German frontier was about a day's march away and Verdun was the gateway to France.

After the Belgian fortified cities had been captured in a few hours by the advancing Germans, thanks to the enemy's heavy artillery, the commanding officer of Verdun snaked all his heavy guns out of their emplacements and hid them in the woods. He also removed the garrisons of the surrounding forts and put them into the trenches. The first German attack on Verdun therefore failed.

The second German attack began the twenty-first of February, 1916. The nearest fort to the point of assault was Douamont. The Germans advanced steadily for four days, coming through the famous Bois des Caures, and eventually arrived before Douamont. This fort was a massive structure of masonry with scarp, ditch, glacis, defensive barracks, disappearing guns, armored observation posts, elevators that dropped men from the interior of the fort into deep passages that led to exits in the surrounding woods and ravines, its own water supply and its own electric lighting system.

It was twice as strong as Vaux, its nearest neighbor, a fort that held out until the following June and cost the Germans a half million men to take. Their surprize was painful when they discovered that Douamont had fallen during the night, and that *without a shot fired in its defense.*

Mystery! How did the Germans take Douamont? The following is the German explanation, an unofficial one, coming from a former buck private in the Kaiser's army who *said* he helped take Douamont:

The night of February twenty-fifth, the Germans had advanced through some woods, probably the Bois de la Vache. It began to snow, and the leading elements of the German advance were informed that they were under the guns of the first of the Verdun forts, and to dig themselves some shelter, as a bombardment would undoubtedly land on them as soon as daybreak discovered them to the French.

A Brandenburg regiment was directed to send out a patrol to locate the French trenches before the fort. This patrol, under a young and foolish officer, climbed the steep hill toward the fort, blinded by the driving snow, creeping, listening, half dead with the cold, expecting every minute to see a flare go up and hear the pounding of the French guns.

The officer stood up to see whether he could locate the fort and found himself standing on the brink of the ditch. Instead of returning, he led his startled patrol around the ditch until they came to a drawbridge which they found down. This patrol, about thirty men, thereupon crossed the bridge and entered the fort.

They found it occupied by a detail of electricians, who looked after the dynamo and the elevators, and another detail of artillery men who looked after the disappearing guns. Two details of caretakers. The guns in the turrets were still thick with cosmoline; the arm racks, magazines and machine-gun emplacements were all locked, and the French non-com in command of the fort said that the keys were all in the office of the chief of engineers in Verdun.

Messengers at once went tearing down the slopes to the German position, and when day broke, the fort was manned by Germans and organized for defense against counter-attacks.

There is no French confirmation of the above, but it has the smack of truth.

The Tiger Rider

Korean Coolies and a White Wanderer

PATERSON could never have told how the thought came to him in the first instant of waking, and yet, before he made the slightest movement, he knew that he had been bound. He knew also that he was alone.

Rain, dripping through the high trees, gave the upper darkness of the forest a sleekly ebon hue. It had been raining for some minutes, he supposed, before the first drops on his face roused him.

The sound which had lulled him to sleep after the day's march—the steady whispering of a narrow stream across the flat of the camping place—made awakening a slow, uncertain process. Coupled with that, he was pleasantly warm; the terrific heat which had accompanied him up from Syong-Jin was tempered by the rain.

According to every report, the north Korean rainy season should not have started until June, but it was raining, notwithstanding. It made no difference, Paterson decided wryly. The expedition was automatically canceled, rain or no; the coolies were gone, and he himself could go no farther, even if he escaped his bonds.

How near morning it was the white man could not determine; that he could not annoyed him. He wondered with rising anger whether the coolies had left him anything of the packs, knowing that they had not.

His legs, he felt, were loosely bound together and then tied in some way which prevented him from moving them more than a dozen inches. He wished—coldly, without panic—that he had overcome the habit of sleeping with outstretched arms; it had made the tying of them extremely easy. He was able to move them, as he could his legs, but very little.

If he had not insisted upon a long march he would not have slept so heavily that the Koreans could have trussed him up.

"I was tired," Paterson thought

By SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

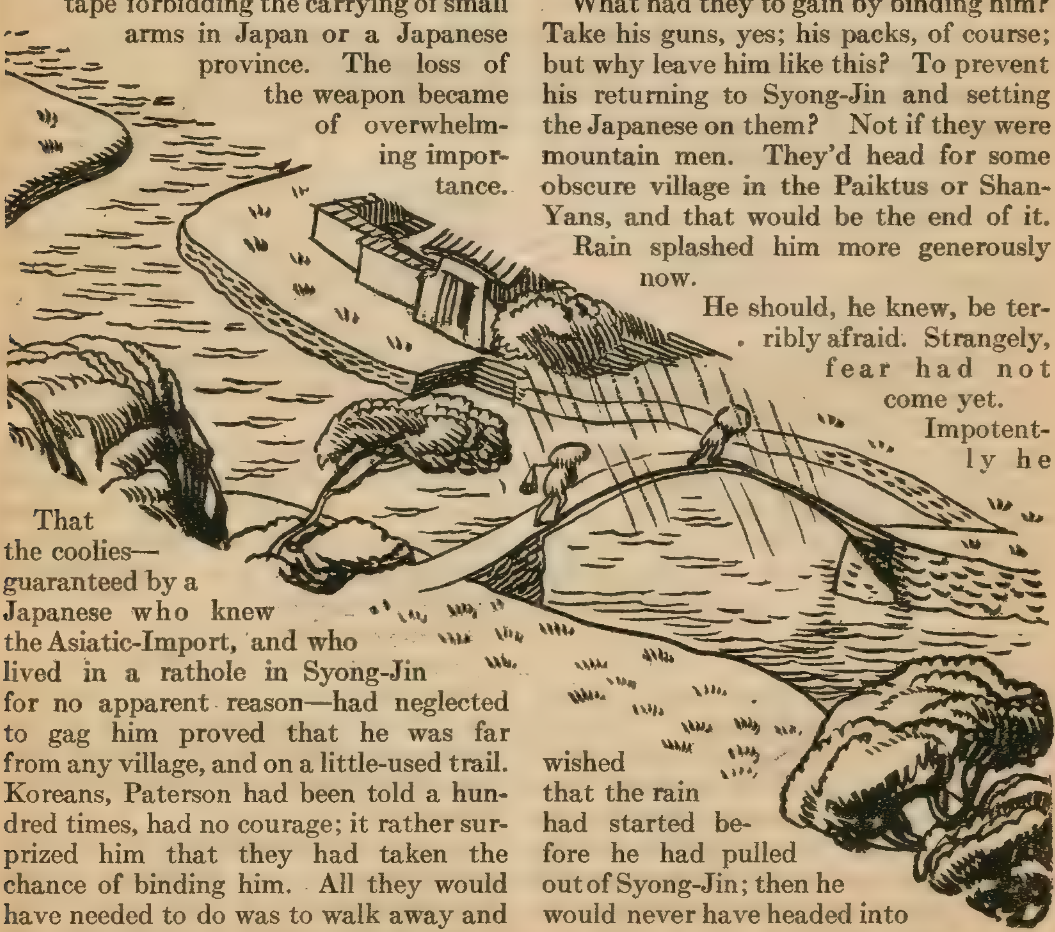
defensively. "It's been a long time since I've been in the open like this without the job on my mind."

He lay quietly. Then, with sudden, panicky anger, he thrashed about.

The bonds held.

He was able, for an instant, to half sit up, but immediately overbalanced from this impossible position, he fell upon his back again. He squirmed to his side, and knew that his automatic had been slipped from the holster, since no comforting lump pressed against his thigh.

Paterson began to swear softly. It had taken him weeks to cut the red tape forbidding the carrying of small arms in Japan or a Japanese province. The loss of the weapon became of overwhelming importance.



That the coolies—guaranteed by a Japanese who knew the Asiatic-Import, and who lived in a rathole in Syong-Jin for no apparent reason—had neglected to gag him proved that he was far from any village, and on a little-used trail. Koreans, Paterson had been told a hundred times, had no courage; it rather surprized him that they had taken the chance of binding him. All they would have needed to do was to walk away and leave him sleeping. He supposed that if his bearers were mountain men, as the Syong-Jin Japanese had said, they had a little more bravery than the rest of their countrymen.

It came to him that the largest of the white-clad Koreans, a man whose features had the stamp of other races, had engineered the unpleasant affair. Paterson was certain of it now. The fellow, Cha'i Kun, had hired the rest of the gang. He alone spoke Japanese, and translated Paterson's orders to the rest. Probably he blamed Cha'i Kun because the man was a half-caste; Paterson believed that no good could be expected from men of mixed blood.

But—why?

What had they to gain by binding him? Take his guns, yes; his packs, of course; but why leave him like this? To prevent his returning to Syong-Jin and setting the Japanese on them? Not if they were mountain men. They'd head for some obscure village in the Paiktus or Shan-Yans, and that would be the end of it.

Rain splashed him more generously now.

He should, he knew, be terribly afraid. Strangely, fear had not come yet.

Impotently he wished that the rain had started before he had pulled out of Syong-Jin; then he would never have headed into the Paiktus. It had been good to walk between the reed-blinded ginseng beds—to see something new, different, and to know that ahead of him—

How long had it been that he'd been planning a hunting trip into Korea? Six years? Seven? Every year something'd stop him. That was the worst of working for the A-I. Why, even this time Jimmy Walters had promised to go along, and then at the last minute had been called down to Yoko for some detail that any clerk could attend to as well.

Even this hadn't stopped Paterson. Despite warnings about going alone, he had taken the S.Y.K.'s flea-bitten tub to Syong-Jin, just as he had planned.

Funny how a fellow'd think of these things, pegged out on his back.

For six years—or was it seven?—Paterson had never taken a vacation, unless you counted the time his girl had tired of waiting for him to get a secure States berth, and he had returned to see her married. For six years—or eight already?—Paterson had listened to the stories of handsomely spotted leopards, of tiger-cats unbelievably marked, of fox and wild boar and the great horned Manchurian deer, of silver pheasant and geese and mallard and teal and pigeon.

For six—or seven—or eight years he had been waiting.

It had been glorious, climbing the narrow, broken track across the bare summit of the ridge of the Paiktu, and then down into the well timbered gorges of the eastern side. Mussan was supposed to be a day distant, and from Mussan the hunting was said to be the finest in all Kankyo, either north or south, and far enough from the silver mines and the Tumen to be little hunted.

Hunting!

Paterson's eyes were wide. What chance had he for anything?

Not once had the little outfit—himself, Cha'i Kun and the five bearers—met a soul along the trail after they were in the mountains. What reason had he to believe any one would come upon him now? None, he knew none in the world.

He could see, at last, the shining leaves of the trees, although little light filtered through. The sun, he supposed, would be hidden behind rainclouds for days or weeks.

The thought of time rose up to choke him. What he whispered showed clearly that he understood what waited him.

"It's—it's no way to die."

HE HAD been awake no more than an hour, yet found himself wondering how long a man lived without food or water. Death he was able to steel himself against; it was the dying which was going to prove difficult.

It was light enough to see that long pegs of wood had been driven noiselessly into the ground; how deep, and with what caution against waking him, he could only guess. These slanted at long angles from his body, and to them were tied plaited ropes of some animal skin, soft, but terribly strong and without give. The other ends of the thongs were secured to his arms, legs and middle. The loop connecting his ankles was not tied to the pegs.

He could move, as one would stir in sleep, but nothing more. It was impossible to bring hand to hand or hand to leg, but with a flash of hope he raised his right wrist near his mouth, and then brought his body upward to complete the contact.

The tying had been expertly done. When he raised his body, it tightened the rope on his left arm; he could not reach the thong with his teeth, no matter how he strained. The distance always remained the same.

He said aloud—

"The dirty, dirty swine!"

The sound made by his voice increased his tension. How frightened he was he would not admit, but the falling rain, without chilling him in body, made him shiver.

It would be diabolical to die of thirst with drops of water pattering into his open mouth.

The notion made him thirsty at once. He found himself wishing for the dirty Korean village water, for boiled milk, for *tansan*, for the seepage from the pest-hole wells, until reason flooded him, telling him that he had only been the night without liquid. Reason made his mouth no more damp.

A red ant ran up his trouser leg and bit him; he jerked so that the soft thong cut into his flesh. He muttered—

"Nerves!"

He fought to lie silently, relaxed. He neither knew, nor could guess, the passing time.

The whisper of the water, the agonizing whisper of water to him, the *pat-pat-pat* of rain, gradually became a bass monotone, over which he could hear the twitter of some bird, the swish of a long-tailed crow's wings, the crackle of some tiny wood animal in the brush bordering the open space of the little flat.

Paterson made himself think:

"I'm between Mussan and Syong-Jin, unless that wry-necked Cha'i Kun lied. I suppose he did. I ought t've known all Koreans lie. Then I can see why they dug out with my stuff—worth more'n they can make in fifty years—but why leave me here like this?"

He should, he supposed, be planning on some method of escape. A bit of glass, a fire, a sharp rock—weren't those the things a fellow used to cut through thongs? Well, why hadn't he some of them? Just one would do.

Rolling from side to side violently, it took him no more than a dozen twists to know that the pegs were not giving; anger made him swing his body in a half-arc upward. The jerk of the confining thongs drew him back violently.

"There must be some reason why they tied me," he thought bitterly. "If I knew what it was, then perhaps I—"

He stopped.

As if his thoughts made a noticeable, audible sound, his mind instinctively went blank; he lay very silently.

He had heard nothing; nothing save the sounds to which his ears had become attuned. A chirp. A rustle in the bush. The wet plot of a pine-cone dropping to the soft, damp earth. As he lay motionless, Paterson wondered suddenly whether the rain would seep down far enough to permit him to jerk out the pegs. It was a wonderful thought, but he erased it instantly.

Something, he knew, even before he turned his head to the side, was watching him.

He saw the eyes at once. They seemed almost as high as a man's. Like human eyes, they were evenly oval, yet were larger than any human's—larger and more brilliant, more yellow.

Paterson believed that tiger eyes were narrow, slit, slanted; he could see, now, these great pupils expanded in the semi-light of the forest, perfectly round. He knew, as his heart constricted, that he was very close to death.

That he should have come to Kankyo to shoot cats made the affair a grim, impossible jest. Well, the tiger could do the laughing. Why didn't it leap and kill him, be done with it and enjoy both his body and the humor at the same time? It seemed to him that the tiger's lips were curled upward as in laughter.

Man and animal watched each other.

Paterson could not see the enormous body of the striped cat save as a lighter splotch against the dark brush. He heard—his ears heard but not his brain—a little rippling noise, possibly the tail of the giant beast swinging in the undergrowth.

The tiger did not move.

Cold crept steadily up Paterson's spine.

He closed his eyes, but could still see the glowing orbs of the cat. They seemed to brighten into unholy, luminous fire and, as Paterson's own jerked open, he was aware that the tiger had come a dozen noiseless strides closer and was now a bare twenty feet away.

Despite himself, he moved the few possible inches away from the animal. The tiger blinked and then lowered its body nearer the ground.

Paterson's head no longer worked. It, like his body, stiffened, grew more rigid. He could not close his eyes again; wide and peering, they stared into the golden eyeballs of the cat.

A second time the beast blinked.

Screaming was impossible. Paterson's tongue was no longer his to control. Through his head ran the strain, "It's no way to die," only now it changed to "What a terrible way to be killed!" He could, some remote and alert portion of his brain told him, smell carrion.

Two diagonal markings of sienna-brown ran through the cat's eyes. No, they were above and below them. Two parallel stripes in the thick fur. Like half of a corporal's chevrons— That would have been easy dying, compared to this.

If only the great cat would kill him with the first blow! Terrible tales of cat-torture swarmed through Paterson's numbing brain. He discarded them automatically as insane. If only he could not smell increasingly the odor of dead things! Would he, when he had been—ugh!

Paterson felt that if the cat did not leap quickly he would rave himself mad.

Something about the tiger had grown rigid, even as the body of the bound man was rigid. What the beast heard first, Paterson, dimly, half-consciously, heard also—a distant moaning, like the singing of a storm in the tall trees down the gorge.

The beast began to wave its tail more rapidly, to weave its body from side to side. The V markings under its head worked closely together as the forelegs tensed.

The storm-sound startled wood-pigeons, crows, doves—a red-breasted stork swung up from nowhere and darted across the flat to the treetops.

For a final blazing instant animal and man trembled, tense, then the cat turned swiftly, with one sinuous movement, and started for the brush.

Paterson forgot that an instant before he must have been inwardly praying for deliverance; forgot that perhaps the pegs might loosen; forgot everything as something deep snapped.

He screamed:

"You're a coward! You're afraid!"

Terror of the slow, lingering, merciless death from thirst had overwhelmed any fear of the cat's probable swift, terrible killing.

The white man's voice rose higher, sharp, very clear, as he taunted the departing tiger.

"Coward! Weakest of the litter! Louse! Pariah!" And then in Japanese, as if fearful that the beast could not understand English, "*Berabo! Chikuso me! Yaro! Yaro!* "

The last word wailed out into a whimper.

The tiger was gone.

Paterson's eyes closed. Revulsion, reaction, set in; his ears were closed to sound as his eyes were to sight.

THE WAILING, so like wind in the trees, changed. In it now was a weirdly human note.

Gradually, and yet swiftly, the blurred noise became the cries of many men. They grew louder, more definite, as the men—beaters—ascended the gorge, and the narrow valley vibrated with the spasmodic howling. Hoarse shouts boomed from side to side through the trees. Beaters, gaining a crest, drove on back down the ravine.

The hurricane of clamor beat about Paterson. It roused him to cry again—

"*Chikuso me!*"

What the white man heard next, consciously, was a smooth voice.

"I can not blame him for cursing you as beasts," it said. "What a way to be awakened—by a horde of insects who yell like the eight hundred and eighty fiends, but, for all that, never beat out a tiger. That beast! *Doko ye o ide nasatta no desho?* Where can he have gone to?"

The newcomer was standing in the dim light of the gorge; he added immediately:

"Sit up, my friend, and we will see what sort of a man it is who enjoys sleeping in the rain. Sit up, and—gods of heaven and earth, what have we here?"

Paterson did not heed the request to sit up. He said instead—

"It would have been—a terrible way—to die."

The thongs had been unbound. Paterson's mouth was wet, first with something cool and then with a liquid which burned him back to life.

He sat up slowly, painfully.

The strange Japanese hunter said calmly, but with an undertone of bitterness:

"I knew that my vacation, my rest from labor, would never last. For five years—"

"I waited six," Paterson said.

"Six? *Hai!* Well, if you enjoy a vacation spent tied in a forest, *danna-san,* I am not the man to prevent you—" then grinning—"Do you care for more of this electricity in my bottle, or are you a missionary?"

Paterson answered vaguely:

"I'm not a missionary. I'd rather have a cigaret. I—I want something to take away the smell of tiger."

The Japanese stared at him.

Far down the gorge some valiant native lashed himself into a fever of vociferous discord.

"That idiot is chasing a woodrat," the Nipponese said sadly. "But you—tell me, what is this talk of tigers?"

"It came out of the bush while I lay here, and—"

"It is not an uncommon dream, *danna-san.* However, if one of these northern cats had come upon you, and you tied to the earth, the only cigaret you would smoke would be in ——, I suppose, since smoking is not permitted in the white man's heaven."

"I tell you that it came! I saw it. Not twenty feet away. It—"

"Tell me how you came to be embracing the earth so fervently," the Japanese interrupted. "Tigers are in the line of pleasure, and it seems as if I am done with that. First, let us go closer to the trees and avoid too much bathing."

He stooped over the white man, but Paterson came to his feet unaided.

"I left Syong-Jin with a half-dozen coolies," Paterson said finally. "Everything was great. I had been counting on a rest for over six years—"

The Japanese muttered—

"Five!"

"—and the Asiatic-Import agreed to give me a month. We were intending—You don't believe a tiger came over to me, do you?"

"A-I? So that is why you speak Japanese so well? A tiger? You must forgive me, but I doubt it. I do, indeed."

Paterson leaned back against the trunk of a tree. Even to him, the advent of the tiger seemed, now, impossible.

"I'm mighty glad you came," he said sharply, in English.

The Japanese answered him in the same language.

"So am I, for your sake, if not entirely for mine."

"What do you mean?"

The Japanese shrugged, and then, seeing that Paterson was waiting for an answer, called loudly—

"Some of you Calm Mornings* examine the earth for tiger tracks."

He clicked his tongue, and then repeated the order in words which, to Paterson, seemed a jumble of unintelligible Japanese and Chinese. Paterson knew the strange words were Korean. He knew also that the Japanese was avoiding answer, but he did not care. What difference did the man's riddles make? It was suddenly good to be sitting upright, smoking a cigaret of silky Japanese tobacco; good to be alive.

The Japanese's beaters all wore blue canvas shirts, across their chests colored hanging beads to which were fastened bird-calls and animal-calls—a disk of iron, the stone of an apricot pierced many times, a short section of bamboo. About their heads were wound several lengths of blue-and-green cotton, the torn, frayed ends of which dangled over forehead or neck.

One of the beaters, apparently the leader, carried a gun as bulky as a Krag-Jorgensen. The others had flintlocks, the barrels of which were inlaid with silver and bound together with thin silver bands. The stocks of these guns were very short. Paterson noticed also that each of the Koreans had a scar below the right eye.

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*Koreans

The leader rose from his search for tiger tracks, and said something to the Jayanese. For a moment the Nipponese was silent, and then he turned squarely to Paterson.

"You are a very lucky man," he said.

Paterson could think of nothing to say.

"Very lucky. I suppose if I had missed you, I should have had you on my conscience, and I could ill afford it—well, we can talk of consciences when there is more time. If it is any satisfaction to you, I agree that there was a tiger. Tiger! The hunting of animals is over, I believe."

Paterson nodded.

"I don't want any more tigers in mine," he said.

The Japanese scratched his head.

" 'He who rides the tiger can not get off his back,' " he announced sagely.

"What do you mean by that?"

"It is like the—what is it—male cow's tail you white men talk about. You see—"

"I'm done with tigers," Paterson said.

"It is a wise man who sees clearly into the future," the little Japanese said easily. "Now, *danna-san*—your name? Mine is Okaktsa—well, Pat'san, the thing now is, if a man desires to rob you, why is it necessary to leave you to die so unpleasantly into the bargain?"

"I thought of that."

Okaktsa scratched his head.

"Did you indeed?" he asked, as one expecting no answer.

The beaters had gathered together close to a neighboring tree. Okaktsa called to them, and they undid their turbans, from which each—save the leader—took out a coil of plaited straw-cord which, in some way, they had carried, smoldering, protected over their heads and in the turbans.

In the Korean interior up to a very short time ago the chief weapon was the flint-lock. Loaded with iron bullets about the size of the old seven-pound shrapnel, British issue, the charge is ignited from the coil of straw-cord, which is kept alight during the hunt, and blown up to a spark when needed. When the gun is fired the butt rests against the cheekbone; that is why many inlanders, especially the older men, have scars below their right eyes.

The beaters were now pressing out these straw-fuses between their thumbs and forefingers.

"*Ame ga ii kagen ni yameba, yorishi ga*—If the rain would stop in reasonable time, it would be a good thing, but—"

Paterson interrupted him sharply.

"The only one of the swine who had any sense was the leader—fellow named Cha'i Kun. He—"

"Was medium in height, but walked with a little limp, which made one shoulder come lower than the other? No? Well, then, he had a squint to an eye, which—"

"The only thing I noticed about him was that he seemed a half-caste—"

For the second time Okaktsa said—

"Gods of heaven and earth!"

Paterson stretched his legs before him. The drizzle of rain continued, warm, steady, pleasant now that he was his own man again. He thought it astonishing how easily he could forget his recent terror. He was now, he knew, pleasantly hungry. Already he was wondering whether the boys would believe the story. The more evidence he piled up to prove it, the surer they would be to call him a liar. Only, he knew, they would use the word with thumps on the back, as if to say, "Of course it's true, old Pat, but we wouldn't let you know that we'd feel like the —— to have you gone!"

Rain, he imagined, had cut off Okaktsa's hunting. He rather hoped that the Japanese would go back with him to Syong-Jin and allow him to buy them both dinner in the best inn.

Okaktsa said suddenly—

"He who rides the tiger—"

"Mounts a very unpleasant beast," Paterson finished glibly.

The Japanese grinned, but with no happiness in it.

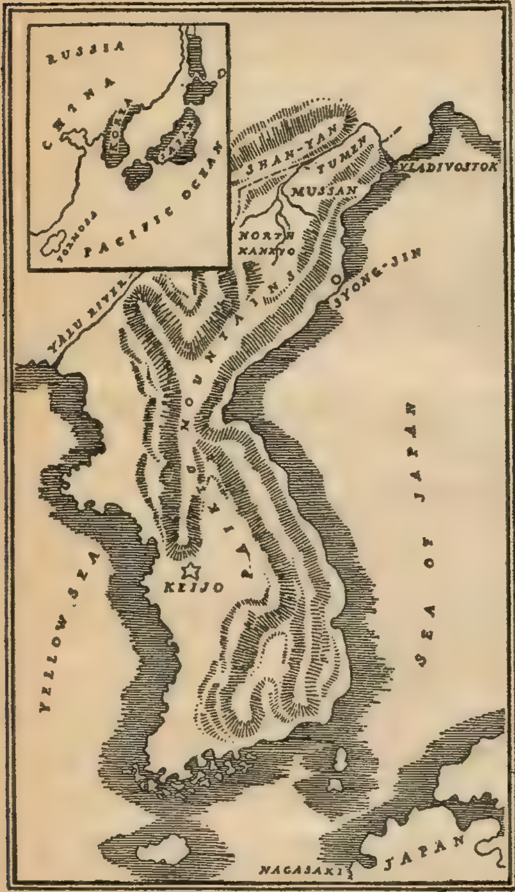
"Seriously, Pat'san, I am very unhappy," he said. "Let me tell you something. No—come closer. Better, let us speak in English.

"Now—will you do something for me?"

Paterson spread out his hands.

"If it hadn't been for you—"

"We all die some time," Okaktsa said. "If not one way, another. It is really of small importance—after we are dead. Tell me, Pat'san—Paterson-san is a silly repeating—can you remember no word out of the ordinary that this Cha'i Kun, which is not his name, said?"



The white man shook his head.

"No. Of course not. Why should you? You were going to Mussan. Do you remember the name of any other town Cha'i Kun mentioned? No again? You are sure? Bah! In Syong-Jin Cha'i Kun should not have been able to show his nose without being reported, and, being reported, would have—but it is too late for that now.

"When we return to Syong-Jin, I want you to show me the Japanese responsible for Cha'i Kun's being your guide. Then I will show you a performance that will make the celebrated death-by-a-thousand-cuts the mere powdering of a *ne-san's* body by comparison."

"You mean—"

"I would rather get my hands on Cha'i Kun than have a cat before the sights of my gun," Okaktsa snapped, whistling through his nose. "I ask this of you, Pat'san. I can not take you back to Syong-Jin at once. I do not want my beaters to do it; I may need them. They shoot with the gun-butt against the cheek, but their weapons make a marvelous noise just the same! And you—well, you can shoot, eh?"

Paterson said quietly—

"I marched the legs off my coolies, and—"

"Somewhere, we may find them asleep. For lack of better place, we are going to try Mussan. True, you did not ask for this business, but now that you are in it—on the tiger's back—you might as well—"

Paterson stood up.

"I'm ready," he said.

At his clear voice, Okaktsa nodded his head.

"We could have spoken of this just as well on the trail," he said, "but now I believe that you are—well, a man again." He lapsed into Japanese. "When we are on the path I will hand you my revolver. I have two. That—like—well, like men such as I being forced to speak English—is part of the regulations. Code 114. Or some other. I never was famous for my memory about such things. But I remember the half-caste!"

THE KOREAN who bore the rifle walked first, followed by his mates; Okaktsa himself brought up the rear.

The Japanese talked steadily. Before

they had descended a quarter-mile Paterson found himself shivering, a cold, chill feeling akin to having the eyes of the tiger on his own.

"It is hard to believe that any one man could be such a fiend," he said when Okaktsa had finished the tale.

"Cha'i Kun is not a man. If he had been, we would have had him kicking in the air a dozen years ago, and dancing to whatever god cared to receive him. He has the evil of both brown race and white—and for months, according to report, has been up to a something we do not know, although I am willing to venture a guess. Now—"

Paterson said in a low voice—

"What d'you guess?"

Okaktsa stopped short.

The leader of the hunters had slid back up the trail silently, and spoke swiftly to the Japanese, who answered him rapidly in an undertone.

"He says that he—smells tiger," Okaktsa said. "He doesn't mean smell. It is a sense you and I have not. Come, Pat'san, we will step off the trail and see what we will see."

Crystal drops sprayed Paterson as he followed the Koreans off the path and into the bush. He tried to equal their silence, but his leather-shod feet cracked partly wet twigs. He whispered:

"Leave me here. You can't stalk a cat with so much—"

Okaktsa put a finger to his lips.

"Come!"

Paterson wondered what good a light automatic—he guessed it was about .38, commonest size in the Orient—would be against a beast the size of a Korean tiger. Okaktsa or one of the hunters would knock the cat over, but suppose they did not? The leader's gun and Okaktsa's rifle were good for more than one shot; it came to Paterson, suddenly, that he had not seen the Koreans blow up their straw-cords—

Suppose that the tiger leaped out from the bush? What then? He had heard that you could not determine what a tiger'd do—run, fight, attack; that they usually did the least expected thing.

Even the sad Englishmen who had done their shooting in India emphasized that fact.

Paterson saw now that the leading Korean had been making a wide circle of the path, and had come at last to a spot directly above it, a place thick with bushes, affording perfect concealment.

Okaktsa motioned him into the brush at once. Despite the initial warning, Paterson whispered—

"D'you expect the tiger to come up the trail, Okaktsa-san?"

The Japanese said—

"Listen!"

At first Paterson heard nothing save the patter of rain. He was crouched against the ground beside Okaktsa; from where he stooped he could see the winding trail and, far off, the broad open valley. Here, dimly, he could see a sprawling village, thatched roofs like little undulating rice-paddies, layer on layer, at different heights. The huts looked, to Paterson, curiously akin to low toadstools, with here and there one with a reddish-pink cap. He guessed these last to be tiled roofs.

"Mussan," Okaktsa told him. Paterson had not known the Japanese was watching him. "What do you hear, Pat'san?"

"The rain."

"Listen."

Paterson tried for some inkling of unusual sound.

"The wind in the trees," he said at last.

"Listen more closely, my friend. Even I hear something now. I did not at first, but—"

Paterson said, very low—

"Voices?"

"The hunters heard them when we left the path."

Although he had not seen them lighted, Paterson noticed that one of the Koreans, a man of fifty, with a complexion like that of a well beaten drumhead, had lighted the end of his straw-cord. The Korean's little black eyes twinkled at the white man out of their buttonhole slits, and he said something—hardly moving his mouth—to Okaktsa.

The Japanese grinned.

"He wishes you good hunting," he said to Paterson.

With a start the white man observed two figures down the path; his hand went to Okaktsa's arm at once.

"Devil-posts," he was told. "They are always in pairs, and are supposed to keep devils from passing. The larger one is called the General of Heaven, and the other is his wife. Well, we will see before long if there is any good in them. *Mah!* If one could stop devils as simply as all that—"

He chuckled noiselessly, and then squatted lower.

A minute lengthened to two—to five.

"What—do you expect?" Paterson asked suddenly.

"Devils—unless the posts are more efficient than I imagine them to be!"

Paterson revolved this in his mind.

"You think—?"

"No Korean villager will come far from his kennel when it is raining," Okaktsa said softly. "Too many demons abroad for their taste. And they are vastly too lazy to do more in wet weather than scratch fleas. And why were you tied, instead of being merely robbed or killed? Answer that, my friend, and we have the answer to everything."

"Then you hope these men—"

Okaktsa shrugged.

"I have given up hoping these last ten years," he said. "Now—our men have not the only keen ears in Kankyo. We must be silent. However, we are on the alert—they are not, whoever they are. I am very glad that I did not sleep in Mussan last night. It would have ruined all this."

The first positive sound to reach them was a windy, high-pitched laugh.

Okaktsa laid his rifle carefully down and slipped his automatic from beneath his jacket.

The white man thought suddenly, "I'd rather meet 'em in the open. This's too much like a tiger lying in wait." He said nothing of the notion to Okaktsa.

He had determined that Okaktsa was a part of the far-reaching intelligence system of Japan, but believed that the Japanese was telling the truth when he said that he was on a vacation. There was certainly nothing in north Kankyo to keep anything save the usual consul, police and postal staff behind the ruined walls of Syong-Jin, although he had heard that the gold and copper and coal mines had progressed rapidly here, and that some day the workings would equal those of Ghiksan and Wun-San and even the Swan Mine of the English at Hwang-Hai. They were still irregularly worked; their output was not the amount to keep an official of the type of Okaktsa about.

Paterson supposed that if the Russians had been satisfied to develop these mines, in the days when Kankyo was still known as Ham-Gyong, instead of marching up every more southerly tributary of the Yalu, the Russian boundary might still be somewhere between the ridges of the Paiktu and Nang-Nim.

Curious how a man should think of such a thing, lying in wait for the fellow who had tried to torture him.

Was it to be Cha'i Kun returning along the trail? If it were—for what? Okaktsa undoubtedly was correct: Cha'i Kun returned for nothing good.

UP THE path, like dirty gray ghosts, Paterson saw twenty or more men. They advanced slowly, and often stopped. It seemed as if they were being driven, unwillingly, up the mountain way.

The voices grew clearer. Many of them seemed to be speaking at once, and were answered each time by one man.

Paterson said, hardly moving his lips: "It's Cha'i Kun. What do I do?"

"Lie quietly. We do. You are audience. But—do not let him get away. Hush."

The Japanese ran the tip of a pink tongue over his lips. Paterson saw in the unconscious action something catlike, feline. He wished unhappily that he were away—clear back to Yoko again. He had now no desire to see Cha'i Kun, or any one else, killed. Okaktsa probably wanted the half-caste alive for reasons of his own, but certainly would never let him escape if capture was not possible.

The line of Koreans was almost directly below the watchers.

Despite the rain, they were all bareheaded. Dingy white trousers were tucked above their knees, and folded over and over at the waist like wrestlers' clouts. Grayish-white coats, open from throat to navel, showed yellowish-brown expanses of hairless skin.

Cha'i Kun—in the middle of the throng—had, however, discarded the usual dirty whites of the coolie and, in place of his former filthy attire, wore creamy silk trousers, which the action of the falling rain turned to a shot-silk. These were tucked into low cloth shoes and tied about the ankles baggily. Over his shirt he wore a sleeveless orange jacket, so short that Paterson was able to see his own automatic thrust through a cloth sash.

At the end of the line were the men who had formerly been his coolies; they made it impossible for any bolting native to flee back down the path. Their dress was not so grand as Cha'i Kun's, but all wore shirts, jackets and trousers, and were thus set apart from the Koreans from Mussan.

Okaktsa's hunters were watching the Japanese and not the advancing natives. The line of men paused; several pushed backward.

Cha'i Kun's voice lifted alluringly—

"What is there to be afraid of?" he asked.

Paterson wriggled at not being able to understand his words.

"What? Nothing, I tell you! Think, brothers! It will be like living in a land where the drums beat all day long and the candles burn so brightly that you can watch the women dance in their robes of white, and a hundred priests will blow horns and pray night and day so that when—in another hundred years—you at last die, you will go straight to the Fourth Heaven and sit beside the Sacred Monks—"

He paused, waving his arms in a wide circle, and then observed that while one or two of the natives were listening, the majority of them had an eye toward the village on the plain.

The only native who seemed at ease was an old fellow who calmly searched for lice.

"But, brothers, before all this happens, what comes? Chicken and fowls by the dozen, brothers! Eggs. Rice, flavored with a hundred sauces, with *kimshee* and seaweed-and-oil and onions and peppers. More than your bellies have ever held in a week. And to drink there will be no mere barley-water, but honey brewed with ginger and orange-peel, and *sool* so hot and fragrant that a half-dozen cups of it will send a man to sleep for a week—to awaken and drink again of more! Full bellies, my brothers! When have any of you had them?"

He worked himself to a new pitch—

"What do you eat now? A bit of stinking bearmeat found dead in the forest, the dogs which slink about the cooking pots; millet full of dirt. And—" an eye to the old man—"lice!"

The Koreans were watching him closely now. Here and there a man rubbed his naked ribs feelingly.

One of them said something to Cha'i Kun—low, as if afraid of the sound of his voice.

"What? A white man is no different from any other man, O brothers! Have I not already told you that I am taking you to see a white man—caught by myself with but one easy effort, no more difficult than eating a mouthful of rice. They are all as he is, I tell you!

"When you see this white man, stretched out on the ground like a dog waiting for the pots, you will know that I speak the truth!

"Brothers, there is more money waiting for you at the mine above Mussan than you will ever get in a thousand years of labor. And when we get it we will cross the Tumen and go to the land where all men are brothers, and not slaves to these brutal Japanese!

"*Sor'y' han'da k'tai na yuma so'naga!* It is not a dream, brothers! Come, I show you the white man, on his back like a pig. And then we go to the mine and tell the four white men there, 'Ho! It is our gold you take from the earth! Give it back!' I and my men will do whatever fighting there is. All you do is to stand about with your guns, so that they see your number and are frightened.

"And then we take their gold, and eat, and go to a land where men love one another. And we will anger the Japanese overlords very much, but they dare not cross the Tumen after us! Is it not good?"

A native scratched one foot with the toes of the other.

"We will not be hurt?" he asked timidly.

Cha'i Kun waved a hand.

"I will be there," he assured him.

Paterson glanced curiously at Okaktsa.

The Japanese whispered—

"A devil!"

A second native said nervously:

"It is said that you can not kill a white man. We are therefore afraid to go with you. The white men at the mines will kill us, but we can not kill them—or you can not. We would not dare, of course."

"Not kill a white man? Brothers, wait but a few minutes. I will show you how easy it is to kill a white man!"

Okaktsa's teeth showed in a wide smile. He muttered to himself, a hand to Paterson's arm.

"Is it so?" he whispered, and waited.

"The devils will not—like it," a villager whimpered, "even though we do only as you say—stand above the men at the hole-in-the-earth so that they see our number, while you and your men—no, the devils will not like it!"

"I have spoken to the devils, and they say it is a good thing to rid the land of white men," Cha'i Kun said instantly. "Come, let us wait no longer. I said I would show you a white man—bound—and how easily they are to be killed, if necessary. Come! There is none who may stop me! You—" wheedlingly—"are my friends and brothers; I am going to give you large farms, very rich, and much food and drink and money—all because I love you. Well, the gods and the devils love me and want me to have all things also."

He lifted his face into the rain.

"Who is there who can prevent you or me from the great happiness which awaits?"

Okaktsa slid from under the brush and to the path in one movement, his gun before him.

"There is myself," he said swiftly. "Hands away from your belt, half-caste!"

The hunters, in the same moment, had surrounded the men at the end of the line, Cha'i Kun's men.

A Korean moaned; there was no other sound save the rain on the leaves.

Cha'i Kun stood as if dazed, until a native shivered, and then the action set him to shivering also. Okaktsa said then:

"Cha'i Kun, there is nothing for you to say. We have heard it all."

The half-caste looked up, but not at his captor; his eyes went higher. Rain, heavier than before, slid down the hollows of his cheeks. It seemed to Paterson that the Eurasian was watching him, and he drew back slightly under his bush.

"I'll have that gun in your belt," Okaktsa said and in a snarling voice he added, "brother!"

Cha'i Kun's neck came closer to his shoulders as the word stung him.

"The gun!"

Okaktsa's own came close to the half-breed as Cha'i Kun reached for the weapon.

There was, Paterson realized, a clumsiness in the way Orientals handled small-arms. Just what it was he did not know, but it was as if the weapons were unfamiliar and not understood.

Something of his own thoughts must have been transmitted to the Japanese, for Okaktsa said suddenly:

"Take your hand away! I will secure your revolver myself."

The Japanese reached forward for the automatic, still in Cha'i Kun's belt; as he did so Paterson's mouth opened to cry—

"Be careful!"

The extension of his left hand had caused Okaktsa's weapon-bearing arm to lower; before Paterson could actually cry out the half-caste had lunged forward, brought his fist into Okaktsa's face and leaped off the trail, upward, to Paterson's very place of concealment.

The gun exploded as the little Japanese was knocked backward. He screamed instantly:

"After him! Watch where you shoot!"

What Paterson did was instinctive. He dropped the gun Okaktsa had given him, and dove at the silken legs. The wet silk slid away from his clutch. Before he was to his feet he could hear Cha'i Kun smashing through the bush.

Whether the followers of Cha'i Kun were bolting down the path, whether the hunters were up off the trail and behind him, Paterson did not know. He was after Cha'i Kun wildly, following the movement of the brush when he was unable for a moment to see the half-caste's bare head bobbing up and down.

He could not gain on Cha'i Kun, but the other was not drawing away from him. Paterson's breath began to labor with the exertion of tearing a way through the thick undergrowth. If it were hard for him, it was equally difficult for the half-caste.

If he had been more alert, Paterson thought, he would have been prepared for Cha'i Kun's escape. That was why Okaktsa had left him behind—to prevent the half-caste from doing just the thing he had done.

It was impossible for Paterson to run faster, yet he increased the fury with which he smashed ahead.

Cha'i Kun rewarded his effort by turning his head and suddenly firing. The bullet clipped through the bushes and Paterson instinctively flinched.

In the half-caste's eyes, however, Paterson saw something of awe and fear.

"Stand still and show me how you kill white men!" he shouted.

Cha'i Kun answered him by firing.

Somewhere in the rear, when the reverberation died away, there rose above the sound of the two men crashing through the brush Okaktsa's excited voice, ordering the hunters to hasten.

The sharp sting of wet branches slashed across Paterson's face. Rain beat down with new intensity; the sky darkened. A sudden wind raged with insane fury up the slope, whirling the branches of the higher trees furiously.

It was no longer simple to follow the fleeing half-caste. Rain fell in great gusty sheets. Wind, whipping through the bush, made it hard to tell just where Cha'i Kun was running.

The voices of Okaktsa and his hunters were lost in the wind's wailing. Paterson, head down, made one wild last effort to overhaul Cha'i Kun. He leaped forward, tripped, fell, every bit of remaining breath driven out of his lungs as he thudded to the ground in a tiny open space.

A foot from him dirt kicked up instantly, and he heard Cha'i Kun snarl—

"I show you how to kill white men!"

The half-caste, turned apparently to take a pot-shot at the white man as he stepped into the little open place, had seen him fall, seen also that he was unarmed.

Paterson was on his feet. In the fraction of time that he was uncertain whether to dive into the protecting undergrowth or come forward, Cha'i Kun, his face demoniac, removed far from reason, rushed him, firing as he sprang.

It did not seem possible that the man of two races could miss, but miss he did. The closeness of the discharged gun sent zigzags of blinding light into Paterson's eyes. There was not time to wonder at the half-caste's attack.

Paterson drove his fist at Cha'i Kun's distorted face. He felt heat stab him under the arm, heard one terrific cry curiously blended with a horrible animal-like sound, and then, with unbelievable force, was smashed to the sodden ground.

Cha'i Kun's chest was pressed against his face, as if the half-caste had leaped high upon him. He could not move, for an instant, or even attempt to tear himself away. The back of his head sent sparks of pain hurtling through him; his eyes closed while he waited, numb, for Cha'i Kun to finish him off. He was, he supposed dully, half-dazed; he did not remember falling nor could he imagine Cha'i Kun possessing such strength.

There came the strange idea to him, now, that at the moment he had driven his fist at Cha'i Kun the fellow's head had half turned, and the expression of hatred had changed to one of terror.

As suddenly as he was hurled backward, the weight above him lightened; the pressure was gone. Could he have imagined that his head hurt before it actually struck the ground? That Cha'i Kun's body was against his only while Cha'i Kun was hurling him down, seemed —it must be—impossible.

The lessened weight must be because Cha'i Kun was springing to his feet; Paterson seized the body of the half-caste desperately, to hold him down.

Cha'i Kun, Paterson believed, must have fired again, although he felt no searing jab. The sound of the gun was clear, unmistakable, close, and yet—dazedly again—Paterson knew that the voice coming instantly with the discharge was Okaktsa's—

"I give you ten won* for that shot, hunter—twenty, if the white man is still alive!"

If the Korean hunter had been able to pot the half-caste, tangled as he was with Paterson, the white man had never heard of such marksmanship.

His head, he knew even before Okaktsa could advance and pull Cha'i Kun off, was becoming warm, sticky. No rain ever felt like the gummy moistness.

HE STOOD up, blinking uncertainly. "He who rides the tiger can not get off his back," Okaktsa said quietly. "Cha'i Kun started all this deviltry—and see where it has brought him."

Paterson looked down soberly, first at what had been Cha'i Kun, and then at the great tiger sprawled in the bush.

He said, unsteadily—

"No wonder Cha'i Kun's face showed—" He paused, stopped, and then said, "It's true. You never know what a tiger'll do. Whether he will run or attack. I thought that about Cha'i Kun, too. But—"

Okaktsa looked at the body of the cat complacently.

"Was it not a shot, Pat'san? *Hai, ya!* We came running, stumbling, after you, but your legs are longer, and we never dared fire at Cha'i Kun, fearing to hit you. We see you fall. And then we see Cha'i Kun turn and fire, and—like a tiger —do the last thing we expected. He should have kept on running, but—

"He may have thought you an evil spirit. He had left you tied in the forest, to be made an example for the villagers and give them courage, since they believe a white man is invulnerable. And yet here you are, pursuing him.

"He fires—he leaps at you. The last leap of his life! And then, as we hurry forward, we see the tiger leap also—and it was the next-to-last leap of his!

"It was impossible to shoot him before he struck Cha'i Kun and knocked you both in a heap. In a way I am sorry. There is a thing or two I should like to have asked him. However, he has done his last mischief; his brothers beyond the Tumen in Red Russia will need a new agent of discord, and his brothers in ——

"I am out of breath—and you are hurt, my friend. Your face—"

"Hit once. Only a scratch. It doesn't even smart now." Paterson scrubbed at his face, and then let rain beat on it. "The rain's clean," he added.

"And everything about Cha'i Kun was evil, including his blood!"

Paterson nodded, and then said rapidly:

"Were you watching for Cha'i Kun? Did you have an idea what he was up to? Or were you actually hunting?"

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*½ yen.

"Finding you—and Cha'i Kun—was accident. All was chance, save the tiger. That must have been arranged by the god who first invented the proverb, perhaps. I do not know.

"When we return to Syong-Jin I want you to show me the Japanese who told you of Cha'i Kun. There is a man who may tell us what I would like to ask the dead man. Names. Plans. Places. There are many ways to make an unwilling man speak, all unofficial, of course, but still very necessary. Now we had better get down to Mussan and rest. That scratch you speak of should be cared for. We can eat, and perhaps, drink as well. Dry clothes—your packs will be there. Cha'i Kun could not have taken them to any other village. What do you say?"

The white man nodded.

"For five years I have waited for a hunting-trip," Okaktsa continued, seeing the other silent and watching the body of the half-caste moodily. "For five years I have waited. But it rains too badly, according to my way of thinking." He glanced at the sky, and then at Paterson. "That is your opinion also?"

So much question, entreaty, was in the little Japanese' voice that Paterson smiled.

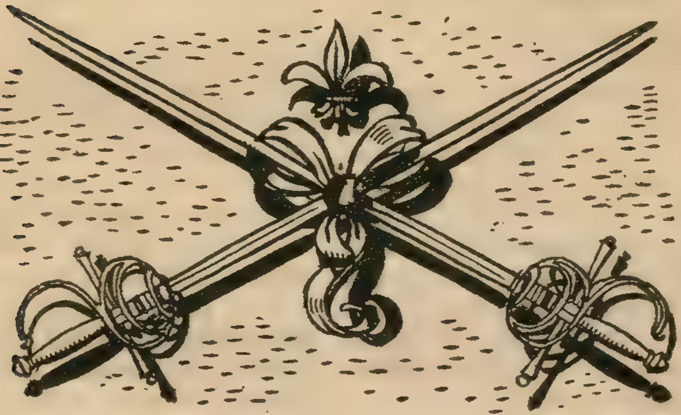
"I waited six years," he said, facing Okaktsa. "What's a little water?"

Okaktsa linked his arm through the white man's.

"What indeed?" he said largely. "What indeed?"

Another of the Goodly Company of Adventurers

JEAN LOUIS



By POST SARGENT

ALTHOUGH he lived the Biblical span of three-score years and ten, with yet another ten for good measure, he never had a surname. Somewhere, somehow, as a barefoot, ragged, puny mulatto child in distant San Domingo, he had picked up the two Christian names, Jean Louis, that later served him, in stalwart manhood, as pegs on which to hang renown.

Noblesse oblige, say the French. And the history of many a great man has revealed the truth that inner nobility, apart from mere rank or title, is a sharp spur that pricks the soul to rise superior to its shell. A cogent force that lies in germ-plasm, not in accolades; and that strips men thus nobly born of the rank materialism that clothes the common run of mortals.

So it was with Jean Louis; waif in the beginning, mulatto, brave gentleman, gallant adventurer, soldier in the armies of France at the moment when Napoleon I was daily electrifying Europe by new victories, when deeds of arms were the proper measure of a man. Then, with the red ribbon of the Légion d'Honneur in his buttonhole, on to a long and honored career as *maître d'armes* in the city of Montpellier.

Somewhere in the jungle blood of Jean Louis were sufficient corpuscles of the type that produced such as Toussaint l'Ouverture, Alexandre Dumas. Waif, he achieved position; puny, he developed power; refuse of society, he won respect.

Picture him, say, in his sixty-fifth year; still straight and lithe, white-haired, a trifle swarth of skin, dignified and courtly of bearing. Picture him as he enters his *salle d'armes*, where a group of young bloods await his coming for the morning lesson in the art of fence.

"Messieurs," he says, turning to the slender, pretty young woman who has entered with him. "Messieurs, I present you to Mademoiselle, my daughter."

Bows and murmurs of admiration that shortly change to low mutterings of wonder or chagrin, when Mlle. Jeanne Louis is induced to choose a rapier and proceeds, with perfect nonchalance, to disarm her father's pupils, one after the other—even to Captain Vaillant, who boasts some small skill in fence in his army corps.

Meantime Jean Louis, wonder swordsman of the century, makes himself small in his corner and follows with prideful eye each agile, graceful turn of his daughter's wrist.

"*Baste!*" he says at last. "Enough! My eyes grow weary with following such brilliant play. I, Jean Louis, am content with you, my children. My art is safe in your keeping. But see to it that you guard it as an art; for though swordsmanship has no protecting muse like music, sculpture or the dance, yet does it partake of all three, through rhythm, grace and bodily perfection. And use it only in defense of self and country."

He passed his hand over his eyes. Still undimmed, they felt the strain of a half century of visual toil and were soon to yield to total blindness. Nevertheless, Jean Louis was to continue his lessons of sword-play for the many youths whom his vast reputation drew to Montpellier. Unable to see his pupil's sword, the instinct of his *métier* that was genius in his case, gave him vision. By instinct and touch alone he felt and corrected his pupils' errors. In actual combat he remained superior to them.

From this quiet Montpellier of 1850 cast your eyes back in time and space, bridging the gap of half a century, of twenty thousand campaigns by sea and land, that separate this gallant old swordsman who wears the tiny red ribbon of courage, from his humble beginnings.

The year is 1796, the fifth year of the first French Republic. Strange things have lately happened in France. By a combination of idealism and terrorism, of savage bloodshed and book-theory, an ancient nation has laid new foundations for the future.

The old régime is dead. Long live the people! Government by the consent of the governed. Divine right of kings yields to the new cry: liberty, equality, fraternity. And Napoleon, liberator and despot, law-giver, constructor and destroyer, looms upon the horizon. Europe, already war-strangled, is soon to feel the relentless grip of the Little Corporal.

In far-off San Domingo a precocious little lad of ten hears the shout of a society new-born—equality! Without known parents, without other name than those picked up in his alley life, Jean Louis heeds the call to his wistful soul. How he managed to reach France will never be known. We only know that, an unconsidered atom of humanity, some Dominican village or plantation spewed him up and left him drifting for a while in the backwaters of the city of Paris.

Two passions early gripped his soul and strengthened his spirit to climb the ladder of self-respect and other peoples' esteem—religion and a devouring passion for the art of swordplay. In the town of Montauban, where he found a home for several years, he was instructed in religion, to which he adhered with a fanatic zeal, reading his Bible secretly in a cellar, at a time when the revolutionists were cruelly persecuting all religionists.

Almost at once he was admitted as a "pupil" of a regiment, though at first he was objected to on account of "his brown complexion and fragile physique." But Monsieur d'Erapé, a Belgian nobleman, fencing master of the regiment and one of the great swordsmen of Europe, was seen to be attracted to the precocious lad. Special instruction, it was noted, was given to Jean Louis for several years. The day came when Monsieur d'Erapé threw down his sword after a bout with Jean Louis, declaring:

"I can teach him no more. His future with the sword is what he will make it. Let me now and here predict the day when I and my fellow craftsmen will be erased from memory by the talent and skill of this lad."

Yet Monsieur d'Erapé was not forgotten, due largely to the modesty and gratitude of his famous pupil. In after years Jean Louis said of himself and his teacher:

"The general suppleness of the body and the facility of the hand, combined with an accurate and ready conception, constituted the principal qualities of the master who has made me what I am. I think I have succeeded in obtaining these qualities by the force of my will, by work and also by reflection."

In 1804, when Napoleon cleverly slid from the consul's seat to the throne of emperor, Jean Louis reached his eighteenth year and was already a full-fledged soldier of the armies of France. Already, too, an expert in fencing whom few dared face. Developed by exercise to powerful physique, he was nonetheless of peaceful, even gentle disposition.

Despite Napoleon's edict against the custom of dueling, the habit of war had introduced it into the army to such an extent that its suppression was impossible. Jean Louis, being young and spirited, with growing fame for swordplay, was often at this period driven by shame and self-respect to violate this edict and his own high standard of conduct.

In these novice days his regiment was stationed at Montauban. Daily his triumphs in the fencing-hall won him applause and affection. But, as always happens, the jealous and the bullies grudged him his modestly worn laurels. To be sure, they ceased their petty persecutions—of a sudden; but first—

Day in, day out, for a month on end, the most feared bully of the regiment had practised his insulting wit on the quiet lad. The day came when Jean Louis thought it worth while to ask his persecutor if his remarks were the preliminary of a challenge.

"Challenge be it!" the boaster sneered. "Though the sword is not made for your mulatto hand, Monsieur of the futile foil."

Whereupon Jean Louis accepted the challenge, with this condition: While his enemy should use the sword, he himself would protect his life with buttoned foil. In vain Jean Louis' friends tried to dissuade him from such crazy odds. The youth remained calm and confident.

"I am so little crazy," he replied, "that I shall, under the conditions stipulated, administer to Monsieur the punishment that he has justly earned."

The keen-edged, sharp-pointed sword opposed to the foil whose menace was removed by the button at its tip! Yet the apparent inequality of such a contest left Jean Louis unperturbed. At first he did nothing but parry the furious blows that the other rained upon him. Then, suddenly, in the midst of a violent attack from his adversary, he took the offensive. With lightning movements of his foil he beat down the sword of his opponent and dealt the bully such a blow in the face that the latter fell on his back, while the blood from his wound covered his face and soaked his clothes.

Thus did Jean Louis win freedom from persecution.

AT THE age of twenty-eight already a seasoned veteran of the Grande Armée of Napoleon. Behind him the campaigns of Egypt, Russia, Italy and Prussia. Thirty battles under the burning sun of the Pharaohs, or amid the snows and ice of Muscovy. A sword that carried death from the Pyramid of Cheops to the Winter Palace of the Tsars. Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, Wagram—each a holocaust in which humanity was sacrificed to ambition.

Jean Louis carried on to the last act of the Napoleonic drama. And his greatest adventure came to him in the year 1814—the year in which Bonaparte saw the fateful writing on the wall. The scene has shifted to Madrid, where Jean Louis' regiment, the Thirty-second, forms part of the French army that is invading Spain. And in this regiment, Jean Louis is first fencing-master.

A motley crew, this Third Division in which Jean Louis found himself. An army composed of regiments of various French and subject nationalities whose national pride was always to the fore. Bickering and boasting in the barracks;

bad spirit and quarrels in the city streets. The trouble came to a head during a carousal at a tavern in one of the suburbs of Madrid.

Some Italians of the First Regiment fell into a chauvinistic, liquory dispute with French soldiers of the Thirty-second. The original disputants were reenforced by scores of their comrades. The dispute went from argument to arms. All ran into the street and a wild battle began between the two nationalities. Much blood was shed and the pavement was covered with the dead and wounded. The guard was turned out and two companies arrived on the run with fixed bayonets. The fight that threatened to become a slaughter was brought to an end. The leaders on both sides were arrested and a council of war was at once summoned. Strict army discipline required exemplary punishment.

The delicate situation was met by the military council in a manner that recalls the diplomacy, the chivalry, the barbarity of the spectacular Middle Ages.

To avoid reference to national prejudice, the "honor" of the two regiments was made the point at issue. It was decided that the fencing-masters and their assistants, called "provosts," should assume the responsibility of the quarrel and fight a duel as long as it was possible to continue the combat. Fifteen masters were appointed on each side. Jean Louis was chosen to be leader of the champions of the Thirty-second; Giacomo Ferrari, terrible swordsman and redoutable Florentine swashbuckler, represented the cause of the First Regiment, supported by fourteen other noted duelists.

Never, assuredly, since the times of Du Guesclin, of Bayard, of Roland; never, since the gentle arts of peace had softened the harsh manners of the society of yore and made modern civilization allegedly synonymous with culture and altruism—never has history recorded an encounter so spectacular, so sanguinary as the duel to the death of Jean Louis and Giacomo Ferrari, with their twenty-eight provosts.

A vast, rolling plain just outside the city. In the distance the same brooding, snow-tipped lava hills that had frowned down on the magnificent jousts and tourneys of the days of Ferdinand and Isabel. Now drawn up in line of battle, the invading army of Napoleon the Great, together with the entire population of Madrid, awaited with various emotions the issue of this trial by battle.

Aye! International law had come into being just two centuries before; the "Code Napoleon" was a child of tender years in the family of world jurisprudence; the Congress of Vienna was but a few months in the future. Yet on this plain of New Castile the wager of battle replaced civil law and the law of nations. The age of chivalry found renewed life and joined issue with the age of reason.

For all of its laws, its veneer of culture, its social cosmetics, the thin skin of civilization was scratched and the Tartar showed through. Yet the thirty duelists were true men and patriots; inevitable pawns in the selfish chess-game of the nations.

Waiting courageously a little apart from the ranks, they hear the roll of the drums; the thunderous noise of thousands of guns that come to rest on the packed earth at the sharp word of command; the rustle of an entire army as it prepares to stand at ease. Eyes front, hearts taut, minds that have forgotten world and war. Even Napoleon the Great, beloved or hated and always feared, has faded for the moment from memory.

Tavern rufflers have quarreled; national honor is at stake; the blood of innocent men must be shed in vicarious atonement. By wager of battle Mars topples Themis from the throne of justice.

A shiver of excitement runs through the ranks. A man has left the side of the Thirty-second Regiment. Alone, tall and supple, bared sword in hand, a world of quiet confidence in his bearing, Jean Louis mounts the hillock encircled by tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians. Calmly, with dignity, he salutes the judges with uplifted sword.

Once more the roll of drums. From the First Regiment a giant advances and climbs the mound. Giacomo Ferrari, the Italian champion. He towers above his slender adversary, dwarfing the Frenchman as Goliath must have dwarfed David thousands of years before. His shoulders are Atlas-like; his chest vast; his sword-arm huge and brawny like that of the ancient, heroic statue of Heracles. A throwback to a primitive age, before supreme skill had learned to baffle brute force. A battering ram that has only disdain for the puny human form opposed to it.

The command is given and the champions cross their swords. Giacomo Ferrari thinks to end the combat in the first moment by throwing all his weight and power upon the frailer man in one irresistible attack. He utters one of those raucous cries peculiar to the Florentine fencing-masters of his day and rushes upon Jean Louis. But Jean Louis had withstood the noisy attack of Mameluke in Egypt, of Cossack in Russia. His calm eye follows the low swinging cut of the other's sword. His own weapon deflects the stroke with ease. At almost the same instant a cry of rage and pain is heard from Ferrari; by a rapid *riposte* the sword of Jean Louis has pierced the shoulder of the Florentine.

"*Corpo di Cristo!*" cries the giant. "*Ma non importa.* 'Tis of no account."

And he rushes furiously upon the Frenchman. Jean Louis receives him upon the point of his sword. A pallor of death spreads over the face of the first champion of the First Regiment. The sword has pierced to his heart. The weapon drops from the hand of the stricken Italian. He falls heavily to the ground. When the seconds rush to his aid, he is dead.

Jean Louis wipes his sword and resumes his former position of waiting, sword point resting on the ground. Thoughtful, a trifle melancholy, for his marvelous skill has hitherto been used to kill only in battle or self-defense. He feels himself invulnerable in single combat; the odds against him do not compensate the futility of the motive. But, a soldier, his personal motives, his ideals, are submerged in the orders of his superiors.

He waits. The fight has only commenced. On his own side fourteen provosts await the opportunity to take his place, should he be killed. The greatest of the Italian champions is dead. But fourteen other great swordsmen of the First Regiment are impatient to measure swords with the Frenchman, to avenge the death of Giacomo Ferrari.

A minute's rest. Another adversary rushes upon Jean Louis. The swords are crossed. Jean Louis lunges once, then stands erect again, with lowered sword. A second corpse lies at his feet. A vast sigh of relief, or wonder, comes from thousands of breasts. A hoarse murmur of rage from the First Regiment spurs the third Italian champion to his doom. No rest this time for Jean Louis. Before he can wipe his sword, his weapon is engaged again.

His third adversary leaps and lunges, his attack a series of feints. Rapid thrusts, hoarse cries, whirling *moulinets*, frog-like jumps, designed to disconcert one's opponent for the trifling second that lies between life and death. As Jean Louis stands impassive, his foe judges the proper moment come for the *coup de grâce.* He errs. His darting sword point bites only the air, but the steel of Jean Louis disappears in the breast of the Italian, who is carried off to die.

On the sidelines fourteen French swordsmen join in the rejoicing of their regiment, but wonder a bit regretfully to how many of their number it will fall to carry on the battle, once Jean Louis has succumbed.

But Jean Louis gives no sign of weariness or weakening. Four, five, six—and up to thirteen! Thirteen adversaries have faced Jean Louis; thirteen have fallen. With such a record of victories, that has no precedent in the history of the duel, it might be thought that flesh and skill would yield to fatigue and defeat. But Jean Louis possesses that secret known only to the super-athlete, the art of eliminating lost motion; the knowledge of how to conserve the physical and mental forces against the moment of exhaustion.

Forty minutes had sufficed for thirteen duels. Jean Louis had thus far dealt twenty-seven strokes. Of the original fifteen champions of the First Regiment only two remained. Pale but courageous, their pride humbled by the incredible exploits of which they had been witnesses, these two stood at the foot of the hillock, waiting to be called to certain death. The colonel of the Thirty-second, feeling that the honor of the regiment had been vindicated, called upon Jean Louis to relinquish to his provosts the right to terminate the combat.

"Nay," said Jean Louis, "although I would my sword were pledged to a nobler duty, I shall not leave the post which the confidence of the Thirty-second Regiment has assigned to me. Here I remain, and here I shall fight as long as I have strength to hold a sword."

He emphasized his words with a gesture of his sword that wounded one of the bystanders who were pressing too close during this respite. He perceived that it was one of his provosts. At once his ardor vanished. With tears in his eyes, he turned to his wounded comrade and exclaimed:

"And to think that only one man of the Thirty-second has been wounded this day, and by me!"

Jean Louis' colonel took advantage of the incident and announced that the honor of his regiment had been fully vindicated. The two remaining champions of the First Regiment had still to learn their fates from the only lips that had the right, according to the code of the duel, to declare the contest ended. They stood in enforced, proud silence at the foot of the mound.

"They can not come to *you*," the colonel pointed out to Jean Louis. "If you renounce your rights over them, it is for you to make the first advances."

Jean Louis' generous heart was stirred. He threw away his sword. He ran to the two Italians and embraced them.

"*Vive Jean Louis!*" cried the crowd. "*Vive le Trente-deuxième!*"

And Jean Louis, caught up in the enthusiasm, cried:

"*Vive le Premier!* Yet, since we are but one family, shout rather, *Vive l'armée!*"

And in this fashion reconciliation came about. Thus ended the most famous duel of the nineteenth century, a duel unique in the annals of these last four hundred years; unmatched for its kind in the records of adventure.

Jean Louis was just twenty-eight at the time of this combat. His reputation, already solidly established, now spread to all the corners of Europe. His long and varied experience in the campaigns of Napoleon, his fame as super-swordsman, his personal popularity and qualities of leadership, won him the offer of a captaincy, then of a colonelcy. But Jean Louis always said no. Fencing to him was an art; the sword or foil, an inspired tool, like the brush of a great painter, or the chisel of a Phidias.

NAPOLEON'S star waned and disappeared. Four more French monarchs succeeded one another, for the space of forty-one years. For thirty of them Jean Louis fought and taught in the ranks of the army. The day came when he withdrew to Montpellier where we found him at the opening of this tale. Loved and respected and renowned, he rarely left the peace of his city, except to use his great influence at the call of the government authorities.

The custom of dueling grew beyond measure. Acting upon the advice of a council of generals, the minister of war sent for Jean Louis to ask him to use his immense influence in abolishing a practise that was demoralizing the army. Wise beyond the wisdom of his superiors in human psychology, Jean Louis arranged a series of combats that brought inveterate rivalries to an issue and proved the folly of the prestige-mania. Then, having effected universal reconciliation, he *denounced the practise of dueling* in an eloquent manifesto. His counsel was followed for many years.

On the 19th of November, 1865, a funeral procession wound its way through the old streets of Montpellier. High officers of the government followed the hearse. Practically all the inhabitants of the town fell in behind. On the casket the grand cross of the Legion of Honor glittered, amid the roses and the lilies. A naked sword, a favorite of the most celebrated swordsman of the century, was balanced on the mound of flowers.

If not famed in equal measure with the greatly blind and greatly seeing of history—Tiresias, Homer and Milton—yet for a brief time the gentle, blind old adventurer, Jean Louis, held the attention of his contemporaries, adding something to the world's thirst for thrills and to the dignity of his profession.

Thicker Than Water

WHEN shifty-eyed Billy DuMond took it upon himself to tell young "Angel" McCoy of a deep-buried episode of his father's past, he quite completely wrecked the household of old Rance McCoy, hard-bitted cattleman of the old school. For Angel, never close to his father, immediately told the news to Lila, who had just returned from study in the East: She was not Rance's daughter, DuMond said, but had merely been brought up to think so in order that she might never know that Rance had killed her real father. In tears, the girl left the old cattleman and went to live in the town of Red Arrow, where she soon got a position teaching school.

And then Angel began paying court to Lila. Somehow this infuriated old Rance, who came to Angel's saloon one night and tried to break him at cards, thereby forcing him to sell out and leave town; but luck—some said, shady playing on Angel's part—cleaned out the old man.

But not to be denied, Rance came back the next night, having drawn out every cent he had in the bank, and played his hand till he had stripped Angel clean. And then Rance did a strange thing. He returned all his winnings to Angel and accepted an I.O.U. from him. Which transaction, had it not been conducted in the privacy of a back room, would have set a number of tongues to speculating.

IT WAS near midnight when the Overland train, traveling north, came in sight of Curlew Spur. The Overland did not stop at Curlew Spur, nor did it stop at Red Arrow, except on a flag, but this night, from beside the track at Curlew Spur, blinked a tiny red light.

It was something that no engineer would ignore. The big passenger train,

Continuing W. C. TUTTLE'S *Serial of Hashknife and Sleepy*

roaring up through the Red Arrow Valley, suddenly slackened speed, and the engineer swore inwardly at the signal that would put him off his schedule.

The train ground to a stop, with the pilot of the engine just past the red lantern, which was sitting up on a block of wood. There was no one in sight. On the right-hand side of the train was the shadowy bulk of the loading-pens. On the other side was nothing but open country. Here the track ran straight for nearly a mile, and as far as the powerful headlight bored out through the night, the track was open.

The engineer swung down from his cab and walked over to the lantern, where he was joined in a few minutes by the conductor and one of the brakemen. It was a common lantern, with an old red bandanna handkerchief wrapped around it.

"What's it all about?" asked the conductor angrily. He was a portly individual, inclined to wheeze heavily.

"I dunno," grunted the engineer. "You see it, don't you?"

The conductor picked up the lantern, turning it slowly in his hands.

"Some smart jigger playing a joke," decided the brakeman. "Maybe some bo flagged us down for a ride."

"I'd like to get my hands on him!" snapped the engineer.

The brakeman turned to the conductor.

"You go down this side and I'll go down the other. Unless he's on top, we'll find him."

The brakeman circled the engine and walked down the other side of the train, flashing his lantern beneath the trucks of the coaches, but without any success. He and the portly conductor met on the right-hand side of the train.

"Nobody in sight," said the brakeman wearily. "Might as well high-ball, Charley."

The engineer had climbed back into his cab, and he saw one of the men signal him to go ahead. It was slightly upgrade, and the staccato exhaust echoed across the hills as the big drivers spun ahead of the sand stream. Then the drivers gripped heavily and the engine surged ahead.

They had proceeded about a hundred yards when the fireman, looking back toward the rear, noticed that the lights on the rear coach were getting farther away all the time.

He turned quickly and yelled at the engineer:

"Hey! We're broke in two, Frank!"

But before the engineer could grasp the import of his words a man was standing in the gangway behind them covering them with a heavy six-shooter. The man was masked with a black cloth that covered all of his head and neck. The engineer started to retard the throttle.

"Pull her open!" snapped the masked man. "Git back there on yore seat and look ahead."

The fireman obeyed. There was nothing else for him to do. For about a mile and a half the engineer ran at about twenty-five miles per hour.

"Cut her down," ordered the masked man.

They were entering a deep cut where the road turned sharply to the left.

"Slow down and stop her at the end of the cut."

The man was brisk and businesslike, wasting no words. The engine slowed and stopped, and the engineer waited for the next order.

"Both of yuh go down ahead of me. No funny business. I'm not takin' any chances!"

The engine crew descended, and close on their heels came the masked man. It was then that they realized that the express car was still attached to the engine.

"March back to the express car—single-file. Remember, it's light enough for good shootin'!"

They went back along the track, stumbling over stones and tie-ends, until they were at the door of the car.

"You know this messenger?" asked the bandit.

"I don't," said the engineer.

"All right. Knock on the door, tell him who yuh are and that if he don't open the door I'll blow it open. I'll give him just five seconds to make up his mind. I'm ready to do the job up right."

The engineer hammered heavily on the door, and was greeted by an instant response. The door rolled open and a sleepy-eyed messenger stared out at them. He was looking down into the muzzle of a heavy revolver.

"Slip yore gun loose and drop it," he ordered.

The messenger drew out his gun and dropped in on the car floor. The bandit motioned for the engineer and firemen to climb into the car, but before they were both inside, the bandit swung up the other side and was facing them.

"I—I was asleep," faltered the messenger. "Thought we'd made a stop at Red Arrow."

"Lucky thing yuh did," growled the bandit. "Open yore safe."

The messenger shook his head.

"I can't unlock it."

"All right."

The bandit kicked the messenger's revolver toward the other end of the car.

"Three of yuh set on that trunk," he ordered.

After they were perched together on a sample-trunk, he went over to the through-safe and proceeded to set his explosives. He had the light behind him, so they were unable to see just how he prepared the charge. It was ready inside of twenty seconds.

"Get behind those trunks," he said, and they lost no time.

On the wall near him hung the messenger's sawed-off shot-gun, and he took it off the wall, pumped out the cartridges and tossed the gun aside before he lighted the short fuse and stepped farther back against the wall.

The car jarred heavily at the explosion, and a gust of smoke billowed toward the open doorway. Before the three men dared lift their heads, the bandit was squatting at the wrecked safe, facing them, as he looted it of package and canvas sack. He stuffed the packages in his pocket and inside his shirt; meanwhile the three men choked in the fumes of nitroglycerine.

Then the bandit got quickly to his feet and stepped to the doorway. For a moment he looked back at the three men, before he dropped to the ground.

"Can you beat that?" choked the messenger. "The nerve of the ——!"

He coughed because of the smoke, stopped quickly and swept up his revolver. Running to the door of the car, he leaned out.

From out in the darkness came a streak of flame, and a bullet struck the opposite side of the doorway. As fast as he could pull the trigger the messenger sent six shots into the darkness.

But there was no reply from the bandit. It was a full minute before any of them would dare to venture to the open doorway. But everything was serene.

"How much was in the safe?" asked the engineer.

"I don't know—plenty. Let's go."

As quickly as possible they backed to the spur, where they picked up the rest of the train. The wheezy conductor was almost incoherent, acting as if the engineer was personally to blame for running away without the rest of the train.

They did not need a flag to stop them at Red Arrow. The lethargic telegraph operator woke up and fairly burned up the wires, while another man ran down the street to the sheriff's office, where he hammered on the door.

"Git away fr-rom there, ye dr-r-runken bum!" wailed the sleepy voice of Scotty McKay. "Don't ye know a jail when ye see one?"

"The Overland train has just been held up!" yelled the man outside.

"Aye—by the Red Arrow bridge," grunted Scotty, who thought a smart cowboy was trying to be funny. "Git away fr-rom that door before I—"

"I'm not kiddin' yuh, Scotty! This is Dan Shipley. I tell yuh, there's been a holdup."

"Chuck! Wake up, ye sleepin' angel! Don't ye hear the man yellin' bad news. Git up and find Slim, can't ye?"

"What the —— is wrong with yuh, you kilt-wearin' bog-trotter?" demanded Chuck Ring sleepily. "Lemme 'lone."

"Where'll I find Slim Caldwell?" asked Shipley anxiously.

"Sweatin' blood at the Red Arrow saloon," grunted Scotty. "He was seven dollars loser when I left him."

The man went running up the wooden sidewalk, and Scotty fell back into his blankets.

"Holdup, eh?" grunted Chuck. "I'll bet they got a million dollars. The Overland carries millions."

"Millions!" snorted Scotty. "There ain't that much."

"Oh, yes there is. That Overland carries—"

"Where to? Do ye think the millionaires send their money out for a ride? Mebbe we better git up, eh?"

"Which way did they go, Scotty?"

"Which way did who go?"

"The robbers."

"How in —— would I know?"

"Yuh hadn't ought to overlook little details like that."

"Ye make me tired, Chuck."

"Ho-o-o—hum-m-m-m-m! I hope Slim decides to wait until mornin'. Yuh can't do nothin' in the dark, anyway."

And that was just what Slim Caldwell decided to do. He went to the depot and talked with the train crew and messenger, getting all the details they could give him and then came back. The train went on, all of an hour off its regular schedule.

Slim didn't have the slightest hope of catching the lone bandit who had over half of the night to make his getaway. To the east of the tracks, only a couple of miles away, was the lava country, a land of broken slag where little grew and where a man might hide away for an indefinite length of time.

The man was alone on the job, which would make the cleaning up of the crime even more difficult than if the job had been done by a gang. The description given by the three men might fit half of the men in the valley. There had been nothing conspicuous about the man's actions or apparel. He wore a large black hat, dark shirt, overalls tucked in the tops of his boots.

"Sweet chance to find that whippoorwill," sighed Slim. "Half the men in the valley dress thataway, and they all pack guns."

"Look for a man wearin' a black mask," suggested Chuck.

"And carryin' a million dollars," grinned Scotty. "How much did he get, Slim?"

"Nobody knows. The messenger didn't talk much, but the engineer told me that the man was loaded down with stuff—and they don't ship pig-iron nor spuds in that through-safe."

"I tell yuh they carry millions in that safe," said Chuck.

"Aw, go to sleep," said Slim. "We hit the grit at daylight and we'll be a long time on a horse."

CHUCKWALLA IKE was up a little after daylight. He had a headache and a dark brown taste in his mouth, which caused his long mustaches to assume a forlorn angle. He spilled the hot-cake batter on the floor and cut himself in slicing the bacon.

Monty Adams and Steve Winchell had not been to town the night before, for the simple reason that it had not been payday on the Circle Spade, and because they were both broke. They joked with

Chuckwalla—who was in no mood to joke—and ate their breakfast.

"Did the Old Man get drunk?" asked Steve, mopping off his plate with a hunk of bread.

"Not to my knowledge. I lost him early in the game. But I got drunk, 'f anybody stops to ask yuh. But I'm all through. Feller's a fool to drink."

"Was anybody playin' the games at the Eagle?" asked Monty.

"Everybody. Rance won—gosh, I dunno how much. Why, him and Angel dealt first ace for five thousand, and Rance won. First card off the deck was an ace. Jim Langley dealt 'em. And I seen Rance win eight one hundred dollar bets, hand-runnin', on the black-jack. He busted the game. Fact. And then he set in on the stud game and won thirteen on one hand. Had an ace in the hole and three more in sight, while Angel held a ten full on queens."

"Holy cats! And did he quit with all that money?"

"I per-sume he did, Monty. If Angel ain't busted, he's sure bent like a pretzel."

"Rance ain't up yet, eh?"

Chuckwalla shook his head slowly.

"I ain't seen hide ner horn of him since he left the Eagle, but I think he's in bed upstairs."

"Well, we shore missed a good evenin'," sighed Steve, shoving away from the table.

They went down toward the corral and Chuckwalla sat down to drink a cup of black coffee. It was about the only thing that appealed to his appetite just now.

He heard a step in the doorway and turned to see old Rance. The old man was bootless, his hair uncombed, and over his right temple was a bruised lump almost as large as an egg. His eyes were bloodshot; he seemed unsteady.

"Well, f'r ——'s sake!" blurted Chuckwalla. "Rance, yo're a mess!"

"Yeah," nodded Rance wearily. "Mess."

He came over to the table and sank down in a chair, touching tenderly the lump on his head. Chuckwalla looked him over seriously.

"Somebody must 'a' petted yuh right smart," was his verdict. "I'll heat up some water and see if it won't take some of the swellin' out of the pinnacle."

He bustled back to the stove and filled the kettle.

"I lost yuh last night, Rance. Climbed plumb over my bronc, just tryin' to get aboard. Mamma, I shore was drunk! A feller of my age ort to be more careful. Did you git here ahead of me?"

"I dunno, Chuckwalla."

"Well, I don't. Who hit yuh, Rance?"

Rance blinked slowly, his eyes focused on the oil-cloth covering of the table.

"I dunno."

"No? You must 'a' been pretty drunk yoreself. I'm goin' to put a little vinegar in this water. They say it's good to pull down a swellin'. Sore, ain't it? Uh-huh. Looks like it might 'a' been caused with a six-gun bar'l. I pistol-whipped a feller once, and he was thataway all over. Figurin' his normal skin as sea-level, I shore gave him altitude."

"That warm water feels good, Chuckwalla."

"You must 'a' got hit hard, Rance."

"Why?"

"You ain't swore once."

"Guess I'm gittin' old."

"We both are too —— old to be foolish. I looked for yuh to kill Billy DuMond."

"I didn't. He's a coward, Chuckwalla. I used to be a gun-man. But I'm old now. They don't realize I'm old. Most any man in the valley could beat me to a gun, but they don't know it."

"Do yuh think that's too sore to use horse-liniment on? Mebbe it is. Skin's busted. Funny about Lila comin' to warn yuh, Rance."

"Funny?"

"Queer, I meant."

"Queer—yeah."

"Wish you'd saved that letter, Rance."

"Yeah. Don't squeeze that swellin'."

Came the sound of horses walking on

the hard-packed ground of the ranch yard. Chuckwalla stepped to the door and looked outside.

Slim Caldwell, the sheriff, Chuck Ring and Scotty McKay were dismounting near the kitchen door. Chuckwalla turned his head and glanced quickly at Rance, who was holding the wet compress to his temple.

"Got company," said Chuckwalla softly. "Official."

Old Rance did not look up until the three officers were in the doorway. Slim Caldwell looked curiously at old Rance.

"What have yuh been doin' to yoreself, Rance?" he asked.

"Gittin' bumped," shortly.

"Shore looks like it."

"You fellers must 'a' got up before breakfast," said Chuckwalla grinning.

"Ye guessed it," nodded McKay, sniffing at the odors of coffee.

Chuckwalla knew that was an acceptance of his unvoiced invitation, and he proceeded to add to the pot of coffee and to slice more bacon.

Old Rance wiped his face with a towel, threw the compress into the wash-basin and leaned back wearily in his chair. The three officers sat down around the table and rolled smokes, while Chuckwalla prepared breakfast.

"Quite a night, wasn't it?" boomed Chuck Ring. "The last I seen of Chuckwalla he was imitatin' a goat with blind staggers."

"I shore got wobbly," grinned Chuckwalla.

"You didn't drink much, didja, Rance?" asked Caldwell.

Rance shook his head.

"I never do, Slim."

"I never did see yuh drunk."

"A man is a fool to git drunk, Slim."

"Aw, yuh don't need to preach," said Chuckwalla quickly, jerking back from the explosive splatter of a egg in hot grease.

"I'm not preachin'," said Rance. "Some folks can't carry their liquor."

"That's me," laughed Chuckwalla. "How do yuh like yore aigs, Slim?"

"Fresh."

"All right, Sheriff. But I warn yuh, they're tasteless. Set up agin' the table, will yuh? There's milk in the can. Say, I hope some day I'll work on a cow-ranch where they have cow-milk. Been a cow-hand all m' life, and all the milk I've ever seen was in cans. And that butter was shipped from Nebrasky. Sometimes we do accidently eat our own beef."

There was plenty of good-natured banter during the breakfast, except from old Rance, who smoked his pipe and shot an occasional questioning glance at the sheriff. It was unusual for the entire force of officers to be riding together at that time in the morning.

They finished their breakfast and shoved back from the table to enjoy their cigarets. Old Chuckwalla gathered up the dishes and swept the table clean with a wet cloth. He knew something was wrong.

"Where's Monty and Steve?" asked Slim.

"Gone to work," said Chuckwalla.

"They wasn't in town last night, was they?"

"They're broke."

"Good and sufficient reason," grinned Chuck Ring. "Lot more cow-rasslers are broke this mornin'."

Old Rance knocked the dottle out of his pipe, shoved the pipe in his pocket and leaned forward on the table, facing the sheriff.

"What's wrong, Slim?" he asked abruptly.

"Wrong?" Slim rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"You three ain't ridin' for yore health."

"We-e-ell, we ain't—exactly, Rance. Last night about midnight the Overland was held up at Curlew Spur. Flagged 'em down with a red lantern, broke the express car and engine loose, ran up to the end of the big cut near the bridge and blowed the express car safe. One-man job. Knowed how to do it, I reckon.

"We was down there at daylight lookin' the place over—and kinda thought we'd drop in for breakfast with yuh."

"Blew the Overland safe, eh?" snorted Chuckwalla. "Well, sir, I've often wondered why somebody—"

Chuckwalla shrugged his shoulder and turned back to the dish-pan.

"One man," said Slim thoughtfully. "It takes nerve to do a job of that kind, Rance."

"How much did they git, Slim?"

"We don't know yet. The messenger says there was a lot of stuff in the safe, but he don't know what it was worth."

"Prob'ly got well paid for a few minute's work," said Chuck Ring. "That's the way to pull a job—alone."

"Safest way," nodded old Rance. "Split with nobody and keep yore mouth shut."

"What was his description?" asked Chuckwalla.

"Not worth repeatin'," said Slim. "It would cover half of the men in the valley."

"Nobody got hurt, eh?" questioned old Rance.

"Not that we know about. The messenger got his gun and emptied it, after the robber left the car, and they said the robber fired a shot or two back at him—just shootin' in the dark."

"It wasn't done by a gr-r-reenhorn," declared Scotty. "That job was done by a man who knew what to do; a man who had plenty of nerve."

"No reward yet, is there?" asked Chuckwalla.

"Too soon," said Slim. "But there will be. I've got a hunch that it was a big haul."

"The Overland carries millions a day," said Chuck seriously.

"Let's be goin'," suggested Scotty, getting to his feet. "Chuck's imagination will get the best of him some day."

"I reckon we might as well drift along," agreed the sheriff. "Much obliged for the breakfast, boys."

"Yo're always welcome," said old Rance, following them to the doorway, where he watched them mount and ride away.

The three officers rode back toward Red Arrow, riding knee-to-knee without undue haste along the dusty road.

"Well, what do yuh think, Slim?" asked Chuck, after a long period of silent riding.

The sheriff shook his head slowly, his eyes fixed on the bobbing ears of his mount.

"Looks bad," he said seriously. "That bump on his head might 'a' been caused by a fall from a horse."

"That's what I thought of, Slim. But by golly, he's cool. His face didn't show nothin' when yuh told him. I watched him close."

Slim drew up his horse and looked back, his brows drawn together in a thoughtful frown. Then—

"Scotty, you go back to the end of that cut, and camp where yuh can watch things. If old Rance knows his saddle-horse is lyin' dead near the end of that cut, still wearin' his saddle, he'll prob'ly try to get it away."

"That's a chance we don't want to take," agreed Scotty. "If he comes, what'll I do, Slim?"

"Stop him, Scotty."

"The proper thing to have done would have been to arrest him on the evidence we've already got," said Chuck.

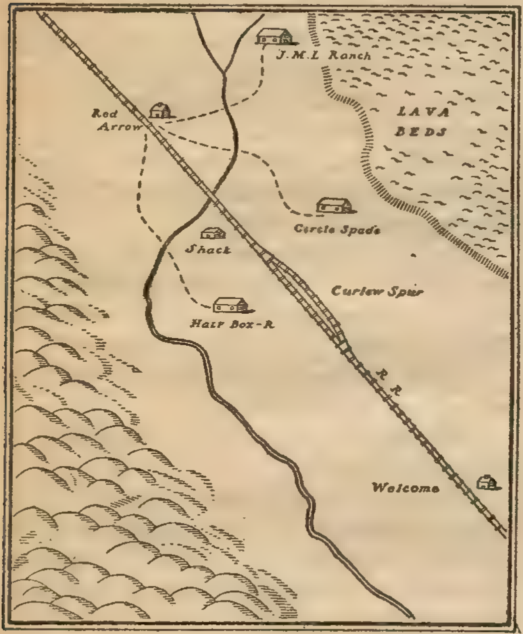
"Mebbe you're right," agreed Slim. "But there's two ways of lookin' at it. If he got one of the millions you talk about, arrestin' him won't get it back. He won't run away and leave his ranch, so we don't need to be in a big hurry."

"That's sense," agreed Scotty. "I'll see yuh later."

He turned his horse and rode back toward the south, while Slim Caldwell and Chuck Ring continued on toward Red Arrow.

Scotty McKay didn't like the idea of spending the day out there, standing guard over the body of a dead horse, but he realized the wisdom of protecting their main exhibit. He had turned back just short of the old wagon bridge across the Red Arrow River and headed back toward Curlew Spur. The going was very rough through the brushy hills, but Scotty was not in any great hurry.

He was about two hundred yards from the end of the big cut, following fairly close to the right-of-way fence, when a bullet droned so close to his ear that he almost fell off his horse. The hills echoed back the rattling report of the rifle, but there was no question in Scotty's mind as to which direction the bullet came from. He slid quickly off his saddle, jerked his rifle from the boot and ducked low in the tangle of brush. The horse turned and trotted back along the fence, hooked the reins around a snag and stopped short.



Scotty squatted on his heels to consider the situation.

"Not over two hundred yards away," he decided. "Report of gun was plenty audible."

He put his hat on the end of his rifle barrel and lifted it above the brush, jiggling it from side to side. But there was no shooting. He put the hat back on his head, scratched his chin reflectively. Scotty was no reckless fool. He realized that he had everything to lose and nothing to gain by exposing himself.

He considered his next move carefully. To his left was a wide expanse of small, brush-filled ravines where he would be able to find plenty of cover. So much cover, in fact, that he would be unable to see anything himself. To his right was the right-of-way fence, a steep bank—and the railroad track.

To crawl through this fence, slide down the bank, would be a simple matter. And once in the wide-open space of the railroad cut it would also be a simple matter for the other man to fill him full of lead. But, reasoned Scotty, the other man might think the same thing and not expect him to take such a big chance.

He crawled under the lower wire and out to the edge of the cut, where he leaned out as far as he dared, scanning the bank along the tracks. As far as he could see there was no one in sight. After a minute of deliberation he turned around and lowered his legs over the steep bank.

Slowly he let himself down, gripping the top of the bank with his elbows. He was almost stretched out full length down that bank, working his knees into the soft dirt, getting all ready to let loose and slide to the bottom, when—

Whap!

A bullet thudded into the dirt just under his right hip.

Splug!

Another ripped into the dirt, higher up, and filled his right ear with a spray of gravel. Scotty was stretched out so completely that he was unable to act quickly for a moment, but when he did get going he rolled clear under the right-of-way fence, tearing a great rip across the back of his shirt.

"Whew!"

He sat up and shook the dirt out of his ear, before reaching back to get his rifle. His nose was beaded with perspiration, and the hand that reached for his cigaret-papers trembled exceedingly.

"For a moment I was what an insurance agent would call a bad r-risk," he muttered aloud. "What a fool a man may be! And still, all I got was a dir-r-rty ear and the scare of my young life."

He laid the rifle across his lap, lighted his cigaret and inhaled deeply.

"If ye want me," he grinned softly, "ye know where I am."

For the better part of fifteen minutes Scotty McKay remained motionless. He heard a locomotive whistling for Curlew Spur and, in a few minutes, a freight train came along, creaking and groaning, the single engine working hard to pull the long train up the grade. Scotty pinched out the light of his second cigaret, stretched his arms, picked up his rifle and sneaked down through the brush.

Inaction had palled upon him, and he was going to try to find out who had been shooting at him. Slowly he moved ahead, most of the time on his hands and knees. It took him at least thirty minutes to cover a hundred yards, coming out on the top of a little knoll heaped high with boulders.

From this vantage point he could get a good view of the surrounding country. As far as he could see, everything was serene. Farther ahead and to the right was an open swale, with the railroad fence across the upper end of it. On the other side of that fence was the end of the big cut, and just beyond the swale, in a clump of brush, was Rance McCoy's saddle horse, dead. A bullet had smashed through its head.

Scotty could not see the horse, but he knew where it was, and he was in a position to see if any one came to molest it. He squinted at the sun, estimated that it would be some time before Slim or Chuck would come to relieve him, made himself as comfortable as possible and prepared to watch.

SLIM CALDWELL and Chuck Ring went straight back to Red Arrow and dismounted at the depot. The telegraph operator came out, handing Slim a telegram which read:

> MOVE CAREFULLY FIVE THOUSAND REWARD FOR RETURN OF STOLEN PACKAGES SENDING OPERATIVE AND DETAILS.
>
> WELLS FARGO.

"Didn't I tell yuh?" said Chuck. "I said all along that we ought to go careful. They want them packages back. Betcha anythin' yuh want to bet, they got away with a million."

"With all yore hindsight, it's a wonder to me that you never amounted to somethin'," growled Slim. "They never got any million dollars, but they did get enough for the express company to advise movin' carefully."

They mounted their horses and rode back to the court-house, where Slim had a conference with Albert Merkle, the prosecuting attorney. Merkle was as round as a barrel, with a face like a full moon; he was serving his first term as county prosecutor, and taking his position very seriously.

Merkle read the telegram, listened closely to what Slim had to tell him and then propounded wisely:

"That evidence won't last long, unless we take steps to protect it, Slim. A couple nights, and the coyotes will ruin it for our use."

"Well, we can't file it away in my office," protested Slim.

"No, that's true. I'll go out with you and look at it."

They secured a horse for Merkle at the livery-stable and headed back toward the scene of the robbery. Merkle wanted to have Rance McCoy arrested at once, but Slim demurred.

"Wait'll we find out what he got, Al. It was a one-man job, and if he got a big haul, he's got it planted. He'll never confess, and he'll never tell where the stuff is hid."

"My end of the affair is only interested in a conviction, Slim."

"Yore end of the affair is only interested in justice," corrected Chuck Ring. "Don't be so —— civilized, Al."

"I guess that's right," laughed Merkle. "It's easy to overlook that angle of it."

They made no attempt at concealment, but rode in at the lower end of the swale. Scotty saw them and stood up among the rocks, calling to them; after which he clawed his way through the brush to the clearing.

"Where's yore horse?" asked Slim.

"Aw, he's back along the railroad fence. Anyway, that's where he was the last time I seen him."

As rapidly as possible Scotty told them what had happened to him.

"Were they trying to kill you, McKay?" asked Merkle.

"Well, I dunno what was on their mind at the time," said Scotty seriously. "It had all the earmarks of intent to kill, Mer-r-rkle."

"And yuh didn't see anybody, eh?" queried Slim anxiously.

"I did not. Ye missed the sight of your life. I tell ye, I was hangin' by my elbows, without any foothold whatever, and I upended myself over the bank and under that wire so fast that I surprized myself. Look at the back of me shirt, will ye?"

Slim scratched his chin reflectively and scanned the surrounding country, while Merkle shifted uneasily in his saddle.

"We might as well look at the evidence," said Slim.

"Yes, let's get it over with," agreed Merkle heartily.

They rode up to the fence, accompanied by Scotty on foot, and tied their horses. Slim led the way to the horse stretched out in the low brush.

"F'r the love of gosh!" exploded Slim. "Look at that!"

The saddle was missing, and from the upturned rump, which had been graced with the Circle Spade brand, had been skinned a spot about twelve inches square. On the shoulder was another skinned patch, one ear had been cut off close to the head, and the left front leg had been skinned from knee to fetlock.

"And the shoes have been yanked off!" snorted Scotty. "I remember that the animal was shod."

"And there goes yore old evidence," said Chuck dolefully.

Slim whistled unmusically between his teeth.

"They kept me away while they destroyed evidence," said Scotty.

"That was the idea," admitted Slim sadly. He twisted his neck and looked toward the Circle Spade ranch.

"But even at that, you three men saw the animal," said the prosecutor. "You can swear it was a Circle Spade horse—the riding horse of Rance McCoy."

"Sure," nodded Slim quickly. "We saw it, Al. And not only that but we recognized the Old Man's saddle."

"What kind of a saddle was it?"

Slim looked quickly at Chuck, who scratched his nose and looked at Scotty.

"I can't tell yuh," said Scotty. "I seen it, too."

"Pshaw!" snorted Slim. "We all seen it, Al, but there ain't a —— one of us that can describe it. I could pick it out, but I can't describe it."

"Not such good evidence," admitted the attorney. "Maybe we better go back to town."

"Yea-a-ah," drawled Slim. "Go get yore bronc, Scotty."

"IT SURE looks like a good bet to me. This feller never can make a go of it. He's all through, as far as he's personally concerned, but the place is sure fine."

The speaker was Bill Warren, former dealer in the Eagle saloon at Red Arrow. Across the table from him sat two cowboys, one half-asleep, his hat drawn down over his forehead, shielding his eyes from the rays of the oil-lamp suspended from the ceiling. The place was a saloon, in the town of Welcome.

The other cowboy was a tall, angular person, with a thin face, rather large nose and level gray eyes. He smiled at the gambler, disclosing a good set of teeth behind his thin lips.

"But I ain't got no use for a gamblin' house," he said in a soft drawl. "I never had any experience. When I spoke about investin' money, I meant in the cow business."

"Sure, I know," agreed the gambler. "But this would be a cinch. There's only one other saloon in the town."

"Just what happened to this gambler who was runnin' it?"

"Oh, he pulled a funny deal. And on his own father. It's a fact. Aced him out of a lot of money, and somebody got wise. Oh, he sure queered his game. I worked for him about a year, and I know just how good this place is. I left there over a week ago, and I heard since that he's shut up the place."

"How far is it from here?"

"Fifteen miles—northwest. Red Arrow is a good town. Not much to look at, but the business is there. Think it over. It won't take much to handle it, and if I can help you out in the deal, let me know."

"Yeah—all right, I'll do that."

The gambler left the table, going back past the bar of the saloon. The other cowboy yawned heavily and shoved back his sombrero, disclosing a broad face, deeply lined, a stubbly jaw and a pair of wide, innocent looking blue eyes.

"Want to be a gambler, Sleepy?" asked the tall one.

"Sleepy" Stevens, the short cowboy, yawned again and grinned.

"Nope. I heard what he said, Hashknife."

"Hashknife" Hartley grinned broadly at his partner.

"Be a good chance for yuh to try out some of yore pet theories on playin' poker, Sleepy."

"And get shot full of holes, eh?"

"Oh, sure, but think of the practise."

Nothing more was said about the matter until in the morning, when they ran across Billy Warren in a restaurant. He was sitting at one of the tables, and motioned for them to join him.

"Did you hear about the holdup near Red Arrow?" he asked.

Hashknife shook his head quickly.

"I just heard about it," said Warren. "Happened night before last. Single-handed job, and the feller made a big cleanup. Estimated over a hundred thousand dollars."

Hashknife whistled softly, and Sleepy groaned audibly.

"Express car job?" asked Hashknife.

"Sure. Cut the train and blew the safe. And what a country for a getaway! There's the lava beds and the old blowouts where nobody could ever find him."

"Nobody hurt?"

"Didn't hear about anybody. No, I guess he made a clean job of it."

"I was kinda wonderin' about what yuh said about that feller who beat his own father in that deal," said Hashknife. "That was a funny sort of a play, wasn't it?"

"Not when yuh know both of 'em. Old Rance McCoy is one of the old-time gun-men, hard as a hunk of flint, and has about as much conscience as a badger. He'd fight at the drop of a hat, and drop it himself.

"This son of his, named Angel—because he ain't—is a wild sort of a jigger. Him and the Old Man never did get along, so I've heard. As soon as Angel became of age he asked the Old Man for a showdown, and the Old Man gave him what amounted to about a third of the ranch, which Angel immediately puts into the Eagle saloon.

"It looks to me as though the Old Man got an idea to break the bank at the Eagle; so he comes over there with a roll of bills, starts buckin' the games, with all the luck in the world. Anyway, Angel had to pull a crooked deal to save his bank-roll, and he finally cleaned the Old Man out of twenty-five hundred."

"Did the Old Man know it?"

"Maybe he did— I dunno. But he never came back, as long as I stayed there. Angel's business got so bad he had to cut down his payroll, and I got cut loose. But there's more to the deal than I know about. Angel had a sister who was away to school. She came back while I was there, and I can say she's a mighty pretty girl. I heard a rumor that she wasn't Angel's sister, and that she just found out that old Rance ain't her father. Anyway, she had quit the ranch and was livin' in town when I left there.

They say Angel is stuck on her, but she'd be a fool to marry him.

"He's crooked, and it don't pay to play crooked in that town. Them cattlemen *sabe* poker, and they sure declare an open season on yuh the first time yuh make a break."

"Pretty near time for the fall roundup, ain't it?" asked Hashknife.

"Sure. If you go up there, look into that proposition. I'll bet you could buy Angel out for a song. He's all through in that country."

They finished their breakfast and walked out to the main street of Welcome.

"Well, we might as well start, I suppose," said Sleepy dolefully.

"Start where?"

"Don't try to be funny, Hashknife. Yore neck stretched a foot when he mentioned that holdup."

"Oh, yeah."

"Oh, yeah," mimicked Sleepy. "Now, don't tell me you're interested in their fall roundup."

"With twenty dollars between us—I ought to."

"And you talkin' about investin' in a saloon."

"I didn't. He asked me if we was lookin' over the place, and I said we was interested enough to invest what we had in a payin' proposition. He didn't need to know we only had twenty dollars, did he? And yuh learn a lot more about conditions if they think you've got money."

"That may be true, but just the same I don't know of any good reason why we should go to Red Arrow. It's only a little range, Hashknife. It won't be long before the old snow will be cuttin' across this country, and it'll shore catch two unworthy punchers with thin seats in their pants, if them two punchers don't do somethin'.

"We started out for Arizona, if yuh remember. It's summer down there, cowboy. I want to read about my snow this winter. And as far as that train robbery is concerned—nobody got hurt."

Hashknife leaned against a post and rolled a cigaret, a half-smile on his thin lips, as he glanced at the serious face of Sleepy Stevens.

"Sleepy, I'm goin' to foller you this time. You've always trailed my bets, and for once in our lives I'm goin' to foller you. Head for Arizona, cowboy, and I'll rub knees with yuh. C'mon."

"My ——!" exclaimed Sleepy. "I'll betcha yo're sick. Don'tcha feel kinda faint? Any spots in front of yore eyes? Kinda ache all over? No?"

"I feel normal," grinned Hashknife.

"Yuh shore don't act it. Huh! Well, mebbe I'm dreamin'. After while I'll wake up and find myself bein' shot at by somebody yo're trailin'. Let's go, before yuh suffer a relapse."

They went down to the livery-stable, where an unkempt, sleepy-eyed stableman met them. He squinted at Hashknife, spat violently and glanced back along the row of stalls.

"We're pullin' out," said Hashknife. "What's our bill?"

"Oh, about fo'-bits. Say," he squinted at Hashknife, "one of you fellers was a-ridin' a tall gray bronc, wasn't yuh?"

"I ride him," said Hashknife.

"Uh-huh. Well, I shore wondered about it. Seemed to me I remembered yuh did, but I wasn't sure. I don't like to say too much, but I'm plumb scared that somebody got a —— of a lot color-blind early this mornin'."

"What do yuh mean?" asked Hashknife quickly.

"C'mere and take a look."

He led them farther down the stable, halting behind Sleepy's sorrel gelding. On the left was an empty stall and on the right stood a rough looking, dark bay horse, with one cropped ear and a hammer-head. It turned and looked at the men, an evil glint in its eye.

"That's where yore gray stood," declared the stableman. "I put yore broncs together. Early this mornin' I heard somebody ride in and put up a horse. I didn't git up. Folks usually take care of their own bronc at that time in the mornin'. But when I got up I didn't find no extra horse in here, and when I went to feed 'em, I shore noticed that yore horse has turned color quite a bit."

"That's not my horse," said Hashknife.

"Shore it ain't. And it's lame, too. Picked up a stone. I dug it out a while ago and filled the place with some axle-grease."

"What's the brand on it?"

"Half-Box R."

"Who owns that brand?"

"Feller by the name of Reimer—Butch Reimer. His ranch is about eight miles from here, between here and Red Arrer. Yuh can't tell who owns the horse now, of course."

"He'd probably know who owns it," said Sleepy.

"Prob'ly might."

"What kind of a feller?" asked Hashknife.

"Plumb forked, Butch is, and he hires a forked crew. Honest, as far as I know, though. That ain't such a bad animal, at that. Betcha he'd stand a lot."

"Betcha he'd give a lot, too," smiled Hashknife. "Is he too lame to travel?"

"Might be. Be all right t'morrow."

Hashknife and Sleepy went outside, sat down on the sidewalk and considered the situation. While Hashknife voiced no complaint, Sleepy knew that the tall cowboy would go through fire to get that gray horse back again.

"We'll wait until that bronc is able to travel, Sleepy. One more day won't make nor break us."

"You mean to say you'd pull out and leave some danged thief to own Ghost?"

"Well, it—it can't be helped, Sleepy. It would take a long time to hunt down a horse-thief in this country. We'll rest up until tomorrow and then head for Arizona."

"We will like ——! We'll head for the Half-Box R ranch and find out who owns that crow-bait."

Hashknife smiled thoughtfully at Sleepy.

"You ain't just tryin' to play the game back at me, are yuh?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, I'm really glad, Sleepy. It's time we quit foolin' around. We're gettin' old, me and you—kinda mellow. Why, a few years ago I'd 'a' started out after that horse-thief on foot. But I'm slowin' up, I tell yuh."

"Yea-a-ah, I'll betcha. You'll prob'ly kiss him when we find him. Trade yore gun for a cane, grandpa. Let's go and get us a drink."

Welcome was a smaller town than Red Arrow, and it did not take the stableman long to spread the news that somebody had stolen a horse from one of the strange cowboys.

A number of people went down to look at the Half-Box R horse, but none of them seemed to be able to tell who owned it. Butch Reimer was well known in Welcome, and as far as Hashknife was able to find out, he bore a fairly good reputation as a cattleman.

The thief had been thoughtful enough to take his own saddle, which was something for Hashknife to be thankful for, as his saddle had been made to order. There was no further news of the robbery, although they heard several people discussing it during the day.

They spent the day playing pool, which was a favorite diversion with both of them. During one of the games Sleepy grew thoughtful, which was unusual with him.

"I was thinkin' about that hundred thousand," he said, when they were in their room that night. "They ought to pay a good reward for the return of that much money."

Hashknife's indifference nettled Sleepy.

"Oh, ——, all right!" he snorted. "For once in our misguided lives, let's show a little sense."

"I'm with yuh—if I never see the back of my neck."

"Then yo're a changed man," declared Sleepy.

"Gittin' old, I reckon."

Hashknife stretched wearily, but his thin lips were smiling as he stripped off his thin, much-washed blue shirt, disclosing a lean, muscular torso. He had long arms, big hands; and his muscles rippled under his bronzed skin as he snapped his arms back and forth in short arm punches which would have floored a man.

His waist was narrow, hips long and lean, and with his high-heeled boots off he moved with the grace of a cat. Sleepy watched him admiringly.

"Too bad yuh didn't take up prize-fightin', Hashknife."

"Yeah, I suppose," smiled Hashknife. "How about you?"

"I don't think fast enough."

"And I'd probably sit down to think, durin' a fight."

"I'll bet yuh would. If somebody mentioned a mystery, it's a cinch you'd forget what yuh was doin', Hashknife."

"It's a failin', I suppose. Ho-o-o-hum! We better hit the hay, if we're startin' early."

And Sleepy knew that it was not a job at the roundup that was calling Hashknife. The moment the gambler had mentioned the train robbery Sleepy knew what would happen. He had been Hashknife's partner long enough to know the inner workings of that long cowboy's mind, and he knew the mention of that holdup to Hashknife was like a spur to a broncho.

It meant a chance to put his mind against crime and criminals; not so much because he disliked criminals, but because of the dangerous game.

Hashknife had never studied psychology, nor had he ever tried to analyze crime. Born of poor parents—his father had been an itinerant minister in the Milk River country, in Montana—he had had little schooling. At an early age he had started out to make his own way in the world, working as a cow-boy, the only profession he knew.

But he had a receptive mind, and in the years that followed he had picked up a varied education, absorbing the things that are often overlooked by other men, more fortunate in their earlier years; studying human nature, but always analyzing things. He wanted to know the why of everything.

Drifting one day to the ranch, the brand of which gave him his nickname, he met Dave Stevens, another wandering cowboy, who became "Sleepy", because he seemed always wide awake, and these two mounted their horses one day, strapped on their war-bags and bed-roll, and started out to see the other side of the hill.

And since that day they had seen many ranges and the other side of many hills; but there were always more ranges ahead—more hills to cross. It had not been a profitable partnership, so far as money was concerned. Right now they had less money than they had the day they left the old Hashknife ranch; but behind them were memories that money could not buy—memories of people who prayed that some day these two cowboys might come back and help enjoy the happiness their work had wrought.

Life had made them fatalists. Death had struck at them many times, but missed. Sometimes it was very close. They both bore scars of conflict, and they fully realized the danger of their work; realized that some day the pendulum of fortune might swing the wrong way.

In many localities they were marked men. Their reputation was well known and among those who worked outside the law, they were spoken of as something to be avoided. Neither of them was a split-second gun-man, nor were they of the dead-shot variety; but many times had they walked out of a powder smoke haze unscathed, while gun-men had to be carried out feet first.

"A HUNDRED and thirty-two thousand dollars!" exploded Chuck Ring. "Didn't I tell yuh, Slim? Didn't I? By golly, I knew what I was talkin' about, didn't I?"

"You said a million," reminded Scotty McKay.

"What's the difference? Dang near a million, ain't it? I'll betcha you wouldn't know the difference, if yuh say the two amounts together. Just think of a hundred and thirty-two thousand. Why, yuh can't ee-magine it!"

"Takes brains," admitted Scotty seriously.

The representative of the express company nodded gravely, sucking heavily on his cigar. He was seated in the sheriff's office, occupying the extra chair, and the two deputies squatted against the wall. Slim Caldwell leaned back in his chair, feet crossed on top of his desk, a frown between his eyes.

"That's what it amounts to," said the Wells Fargo man. "There's a five thousand dollar reward."

"And who in ——," said Chuck querulously, "would be fool enough to trade yuh a hundred and thirty-two thousand dollars for five thousand?"

"That all depends on the point of view."

"Well, I know what mine would be."

"Yuh spoke of valuable packages," said Slim.

"Yes, I did. There are two packages, each containing fifty cut diamonds. These packages are worth twenty-five thousand each. There is one small package containing a single diamond ring, worth ten thousand dollars. Another package contains five platinum and diamond watches, valued at seven thousand. A package of currency worth thirty-five thousand, a canvas sack of gold worth ten thousand and a package of negotiable bonds worth twenty thousand. In all there were seven packages."

"Good ——!" snorted Chuck. "Some fellers shore do have all the luck. If I held up that train I'd prob'ly get a mail-order catalogue."

"You say you are not a detective," said Slim.

"I am not; I merely represent the company. I don't know what good a detective would do in a case of this kind. It is merely a case of a lone bandit holding up the train and making his getaway. His capture would consist more of luck than anything else. As you have said, the description of the robber would fit half the men in the valley. And as far as that is concerned, any one man in the valley could have done the job."

"And he'd be a sucker to give it back," declared Chuck.

"We don't expect him to give it back. But to the man who can recover that money—or rather the packages, intact—we will give five thousand dollars."

Slim did not tell the Wells Fargo man about his suspicions in regard to Rance McCoy, but Merkle, the prosecutor, did, and the man came straight back to Slim about it.

"With all that evidence, why don't you arrest him, Sheriff?"

"I can," said Slim, "but you'll never get yore stuff back. Old Rance McCoy would see you and yore company in —— before he'd squawk. If you want to pay a hundred and thirty-two thousand dollars for puttin' him in jail—it's yore money. And if Merkle don't quit blattin' about what he knows, we'll never get it."

"The prosecutor wants a conviction, of course."

"And you want the money back," said Slim dryly. "Mebbe you better tell Merkle to keep his mouth shut, eh?"

"Might be a good idea, Sheriff."

"Best in the world."

Slim Caldwell left Chuck and Scotty at the office, saddled his horse and rode away. He thought of going down to the Circle Spade and having a heart-to-heart talk with old Rance. So he set out, and had almost reached the ranch before he decided to postpone it for a while.

And instead of going to see old Rance, he swung off to the right and went down to the big cut along the railroad. The coyotes and magpies had been busy at the carcass of their Exhibit A, and there was little left of it. Below the big cut, near Curlew Spur, was a crossing, where Slim cut across the tracks and headed for the Half-Box R. It was not over two miles to Butch Reimer's ranch.

Slim found Butch at home, with Billy DuMond. The rest of the crew were working.

Butch greeted the sheriff pleasantly enough, but his small eyes showed a certain curiosity over the sheriff's visit. DuMond had not been in Red Arrow since Rance McCoy had practically run him out of town, and Slim thought he acted a trifle sheepish about it, although nothing was said about the incident.

"What's new on the robbery?" asked Butch.

"Nothin' much, Butch. He got a hundred and thirty-two thousand dollars' worth."

"What do yuh know about that! Gosh, that was worth goin' after, Slim."

"Shore was."

"Who have we here?" grunted DuMond.

Hashknife and Sleepy were riding up through the big gate, heading directly to the ranch-house.

"I never seen them two before," said DuMond.

"Howdy," greeted Butch, getting to his feet.

The two cowboys dismounted and led their horses up to the porch.

"Howdy, folks," smiled Hashknife. "Is this the Half-Box R outfit?"

"This is her," nodded Butch.

"Fine. Take a look at that bay and see if yuh can remember who owned it last."

Butch walked down the steps and looked the animal over. Slim also moved down and examined the animal.

"Wears my brand," said Butch thoughtfully. "I don't just remember that particular animal. What about him, stranger?"

"That particular animal," said Hashknife slowly, "was left in place of my horse, night before last, in Welcome."

"Yea-a-ah? Well, I'll be darned!"

"And I thought yuh might know who owned the animal."

"No-o-o-o, I can't say I do. Funny he'd leave this horse and take yore animal."

"This one had a sore foot. That's why we're a day late in lookin' up that light-fingered jigger's family tree."

Butch Reimer laughed softly and looked at Hashknife. Slim did not grin. He studied the horse closely and turned to Hashknife.

"I'm the sheriff of this county," he said. "Name's Slim Caldwell."

Hashknife thrust out his hand quickly.

"Pleased to meet yuh, Sheriff. My name's Hartley. Meet my pardner, Stevens."

Slim introduced them to Reimer and DuMond.

"Goin' to be around here a while, Hartley?" asked Butch.

"Long enough to see who got my bronc."

"Oh, yeah. If yo're lookin' for work, there'll be plenty of it. Roundup starts in a week or so, and there ain't too many cow-hands in this country."

"We're headin' for Arizona," explained Hashknife.

"Goin' down where it's hot, eh?"

"Why don't yuh jist keep that horse?" queried DuMond. "He's as good as you'll find."

"Not if I find mine," smiled Hashknife.

"Lost horses are always best," laughed DuMond.

"It ain't so much the difference in the animals," said Hashknife. "I like to keep what I own."

"Well, I never quarreled much, if I got a fair exchange."

"*You* probably wouldn't."

DuMond took a good look at Hashknife's gray eyes, and decided not to carry the conversation any further.

"You boys goin' on to Red Arrow?" asked Slim.

"We didn't intend to," replied Hashknife. "I'm sorry yuh don't remember who owned that horse, 'cause I'd shore like to find the ex-owner and explain the difference between this bronc and the one he took from me."

"Might as well take a look at the town," suggested Sleepy. "We're this far, so we might as well go on."

"Sure," agreed Slim heartily. "Ride along with me."

They left the Half-Box R and rode away toward Red Arrow together. Slim was not very communicative, and Hashknife noticed that he looked often at the bay horse.

"Not wishin' to get personal on short acquaintance," smiled Hashknife, "but haven't you an idea who owned this horse, Sheriff?"

"I can't swear that I do, Hartley. Yuh might be fooled in a bay horse, so I better keep my mouth shut. Stealin' horses is a crime in this country, yuh know."

"I thought it might be. It is in several places I've been. Down at Welcome I was talkin' to a gambler who used to deal at the Eagle in Red Arrow, and he told me quite a lot about the place. His name was Warren."

"Oh, yeah—Bill Warren. I heard he was down there. The Eagle has closed its doors."

"He said it probably would. Did McCoy go busted?"

"More than likely. His Old Man won pretty close to eight thousand the night before it closed."

"Did he pay it?"

Slim laughed shortly.

"I dunno. Don't see how he could. That's a lot of money, Hartley. Remember that feller DuMond yuh just met at the ranch? Well, old Rance McCoy danged near killed him that night. He shore made DuMond crawl."

"Rance McCoy is pretty salty, eh?"

"About ninety-nine per cent."

They crossed the river and were almost to town when Slim Caldwell looked sharply at Hashknife.

"You don't happen to be any relation to a feller named Hartley that was up on the Thunder River range for a while a year or so ago, do yuh?"

"I dunno," replied Hashknife. "There's more or less Hartleys scattered over the country."

"Not this kind of a Hartley."

"Colored one?" grinned Hashknife.

"Pretty much white, as far as I've heard."

"I guess it wasn't any of my relatives, Sheriff."

"Prob'ly not. It just struck me kinda queer that there should be two Hartleys runnin' around with Stevens for a bunkie."

Hashknife's face did not change expression, and when the sheriff looked at Sleepy, there was only mild wonder in that worthy's innocent blue eyes.

"That shore *is* funny," said Sleepy seriously.

"There's a lot of queer things in the world," said Hashknife. "It kinda amazes us three to think that there should be two sets of Hartleys and Stevens, runnin' loose thataway. In fact, there ain't many folks that would believe it, so let's not tell anybody else, Sheriff."

Slim eased himself in his saddle and nodded shortly.

"I don't want to make myself out a liar," he said seriously. "As far as I know, there's only one set."

"And that's no lie," smiled Hashknife.

They rode past the little schoolhouse and saw Lila and Angel on the porch talking to each other. Hashknife happened to see the expression on Slim's face when he saw Lila and Angel, and he knew the sheriff was annoyed.

"That was Angel McCoy and Lila Stevens," said Slim. "At least, they say her name is Stevens."

"Thasso?" grunted Sleepy. "What do yuh know about that? I've knowed a lot of folks named Stevens, but she's the first one I ever felt like scrapin' up relationship with."

LILA had sent for Angel. After what had happened in the Eagle that night she felt that she would never want to speak to him again; but she wanted to know what was in that letter. Angel had only blurted a few words.

But he refused to tell her any more. He seemed to blame her for all his hard luck, which was manifestly unfair.

"Why didn't you keep out of there?" he asked her. "You ruined everything. Even if Rance McCoy *had* practically busted my bank, he had brought the crowd back to my place, and I'd get it all back with interest. But if you want to know so much about yourself, I'll tell yuh this much: Your mother died in an insane asylum and your father was shot for robbing a bank."

Lila stepped back against the building, her face growing white, her eyes widening in horror.

"Angel, that is not true!" she gasped. "You are lying, just to hurt me."

He shook his head quickly.

"No, I'm not lyin'. I tell yuh, it's true. Rance McCoy can't deny it. I had it all in writin'—but he tore it up. Oh, I can get another letter. Or you might write to the sheriff of Medicine Tree. He dug up the information for me."

Angel turned and walked away, leaving her staring after him, her eyes full of misery. Her mother insane! Her father a thief! What a parentage!

She dismissed school for the afternoon, and the fifteen pupils went whooping away across the schoolyard. As she walked back down the street toward Parker's home, it seemed as if every one on the street was looking at her, talking about her.

Suddenly she looked up. In front of her stood Rance McCoy. He was looking at her seriously, his mouth twisted a little, as if he wanted to smile, but was afraid.

For several moments they looked at each other. Then—

"Yuh look like you'd jist seen a ghost, Lila," he said.

Ghost! She wondered whether he had talked with Angel.

"You ain't sick, are yuh, Lila?"

"Sick?" Her voice sounded hoarse. "I—I guess I am. I talked with Angel today."

Old Rance peered closely at her, coming nearer.

"You talked with Angel, eh? What about, Lila?"

"About my—my parents."

"Yea-a-ah?" The old man's lips tightened and he rubbed the knuckles of his right hand along the filled loops of his cartridge-belt.

"He's bitter," she said, as if defending him.

"Bitter, is he?" Rance laughed harshly. "Oh, I suppose he is—the dirty sidewinder."

"He's your son, Rance McCoy."

"That don't stop him from bein' a sidewinder, does it?"

"Perhaps not. Oh, I'm sorry I went to the Eagle that night. I suppose it was none of my business; but he had admitted to me that he dealt crooked with you. You had already given him so much, you know."

"I'm glad yuh came," he said slowly. "It kinda showed that yuh—yuh hadn't forgotten the old man. Angel hates me. He's always hated me, Lila. And I'm gettin' so old that it hurts to be hated."

"I'm sorry. I—I don't hate you. But it wasn't fair to never let me know who I was. Angel swears that I came to expose him that night in order to—to get some of your money."

"Some of *my* money, eh?" Old Rance smiled bitterly.

"He brags about how much of it he got."

"Does he? It's worth braggin' about, Lila. How is yore school comin' along?"

"All right. I love the work."

"Well, that's fine. It's good, honest work, Lila. We miss yuh out at the Circle Spade—me and Chuckwalla."

"I may come out some day," she said.

"That would sure be fine, Lila."

He watched her go on down the street, and then went over to the Red Arrow bank, where he found Merkle, the prosecuting attorney, talking with the cashier. Merkle and Rance had never been friends, so they ignored each other.

DOWN at the sheriff's office Chuck Ring was making a close examination of the horse Hashknife had ridden, and when he went back into the office he declared he knew the owner of the horse.

"That's the horse 'Kid' Glover's been ridin'," he stated. "He broke the animal himself. There's a scar on its left shoulder where it bucked into a hitchin'-post over by the Red Arrow saloon. If Butch Reimer says he don't know that horse, he's either mistaken or lyin' about it."

"Are yuh sure of it, Chuck?" asked Slim.

"Jist as sure as ——. You go look at it, Scotty."

Scotty McKay grinned and shook his head.

"Don't need to," he said. "I knew the animal the moment I seen it; but I didn't know whether it was supposed to be recognized or not."

"And what kind of a jigger is Kid Glover?" asked Hashknife.

"If Kid Glover was in town and yuh heard a dog yelp, you'd know —— well who kicked it," said Chuck Ring.

Hashknife grinned at Chuck.

"That's sure givin' him a bad name, Ring."

"He's a bad boy," said Slim seriously. "Arizona puncher, ignorant as ——. He's kept pretty well out of trouble around here, but he's got the earmarks of a bad actor."

"Well, we might as well go back there and teach him the difference between bay and gray," said Sleepy.

"Sheriff, do yuh suppose he's ignorant enough to make that trade in Welcome and come back to the ranch with the gray horse?" asked Hashknife.

Slim shook his head quickly.

"The Kid is ignorant, but that don't mean he's a fool. You'll have to look farther than the Half-Box R, Hartley."

"That's what I was thinkin'."

"But why would Butch Reimer deny knowin' the horse?" wondered Scotty McKay.

"Now yo're talkin'," grunted Chuck.

"And that's about all," said Slim quickly. "Butch Reimer ain't so poor he has to steal horses."

"Well, it looks to me as though I better be satisfied with the trade," grinned Hashknife. "I dunno just where we're goin', but when we get there I'll drop yuh a card. That gray horse will weigh close to twelve hundred, and on his left shoulder is a Cross-in-a-Box brand. He's five years old and he'll buck when the spirit moves him."

"I'll shore keep an eye out for him, Hartley," said Slim. "If he shows up, I'll get him for yuh."

"Thanks."

Hashknife and Sleepy walked outside to their horses, followed by the sheriff and his men. Hashknife mounted, but Sleepy merely untied his animal, looking curiously at Hashknife.

"Do yuh mean that we're headin' back?" asked Sleepy.

"Sure," said Hashknife seriously. "We'll sleep in Welcome tonight and then head south in the mornin'."

"We will, like ——!" blurted Sleepy. "What's the matter with you—losin' yore grip, cowboy? Do you mean to set there and tell me that yo're goin' to let a —— ignorant puncher forcibly trade yuh out of Ghost?"

"Well, it might take a long time, Sleepy. You wanted to go to Arizona pretty bad, and I just thought—"

"Well, we ain't goin'—jist yet. Arizona won't move away, will it? Git off that bronc and let's find a place to sleep."

"We-e-e-ell, all right," grudgingly. "I suppose I've got to go through life, humorin' yuh, feller. I hope some day to have my own way in somethin'."

But Sleepy knew Hashknife's true feelings in the matter; knew that it would break Hashknife's heart to go away and leave Ghost in the hands of some one else. And he knew that the puzzle of the train robbery was calling Hashknife to action.

With all Sleepy's objections to working with Hashknife in solving these range mysteries, he was just as eager to mix into them as was Hashknife.

Scotty McKay went with them to the livery-stable and to the hotel. When they went back to the office they found Slim talking with Merkle. After Merkle went away Slim called Hashknife aside.

"You heard some of the talk about old Rance McCoy beatin' the Eagle games out of close to eight thousand, didn't yuh?" asked Slim.

Hashknife said he had.

"Well," continued Slim," here's the queer part of it: The Old Man drew seventy-five hundred from the bank that day—every cent he had. Now, he won close to eight thousand, which would make his roll close to sixteen thousand dollars. Today, so Merkle tells me, the Old Man borrowed five hundred from the bank."

"And you think the Old Man robbed that train, eh?"

"Who told yuh that?"

"Nobody; I just felt it."

"Uh-huh, and I'll tell yuh why, Hartley."

Slim explained about finding Rance McCoy's horse near the spot where the safe had been blown, and some of the things that happened during the actual blowing of the safe. He told Hashknife about the bruise on the old man's head, and of the shots that had been fired at Scotty when he went back to guard their evidence.

"Maybe somebody stole the horse," said Hashknife.

"If they did, why didn't the Old Man say something about it? He's never said a word about it. And the men who shot at Scotty took away the saddle, after skinnin' off all the brands and identifyin' marks."

"How does it happen that yuh never arrested him?"

"Stole too much money. Amounts to over a hundred thousand, and when a man steals that much it's pretty hard to put him in jail—until the money is found, yuh know."

"That's all right, but how are yuh goin' to find out?"

"And there yuh are," sighed Slim.

"You spoke about Angel McCoy goin' broke. The robbery was a one-man job."

"That's true. I tell yuh, Hartley, there's a lot of men in this country that would probably take a chance on that much money."

"Yuh don't need to confine yourself to *this* country."

"I suppose not. I'm no detective. I believe one-third of what I hear, and a half of all I see. I'm no closer to findin' out who robbed that train than I was the night it happened."

"Some cowboy may start wearin' diamonds," grinned Hashknife. "They won't be easy to dispose of in this country."

"Whoever got 'em can afford to wait for a chance to turn 'em into money—and they might wait a long time."

Hashknife liked Slim Caldwell. He seemed to have a lot of common sense. But Hashknife was more interested in old Rance McCoy. They had told Hashknife about Chuckwalla, and he sounded rather interesting. While the robbery of the express safe held certain elements of mystery, Hashknife was not greatly interested in it—yet.

It rather amused him to think that the sheriff, prosecuting attorney and the Wells Fargo representative believed that old Rance McCoy robbed the train, but that because of the great amount of money involved, they hesitated to charge him with the crime.

He wondered why Kid Glover traded horses with him. It looked as if the Kid, traveling fast, crippled his horse and was obliged to make a quick trade. But why had the Kid been traveling fast, he wondered? And why did Butch Reimer deny any knowledge of that bay horse, when Chuck Ring and Scotty McKay had been able to identify it instantly? Hashknife decided that the thing to do was to find out something about Kid Glover.

"OF ALL the exasperatin' —— old badgers I ever did see, yo're the worst, Rance!"

Chuckwalla Ike sloshed a shirt up and down in a pan of soapy water and glared at Rance McCoy, who was tilted back against the kitchen wall, his heels hooked over the rung of a chair.

Rance made no reply to Chuckwalla's outburst, and it made Chuckwalla mad to be ignored. He yanked viciously on one side of his long mustache with a soapy finger and thumb, which caused the mustache to curl up in a dripping ringlet.

"Why in —— don'tcha try to find out where yore horse and saddle is?" demanded Chuckwalla. "Don'tchar care? Is the Circle Spade so —— rich that yuh can lose a horse and saddle every once in a while and not miss it?"

The old man continued his thoughtful scrutiny of the worn kitchen floor, ignoring Chuckwalla's outburst. Finally he lifted his head and looked at Chuckwalla, who was now wringing the shirt.

"I heard somethin' about that horse," he said slowly.

"Yuh did, eh?"

"Uh-huh. I reckon me and you are about the only folks around here that don't know it. Jim Langley talked to me today about it."

Chuckwalla hung the shirt over the back of a chair and seated himself in the chair, facing Rance.

"Yea-a-ah?" he queried drawlingly. "And now I'm the only one that don't know. Jist about what in —— are you talkin' about, Rance?"

"That holdup, Chuckwalla. Jist outside the railroad fence they found my horse and saddle the mornin' of the robbery. Horse had been shot. Yuh see, the messenger fired several shots."

Chuckwalla fingered his mustaches violently.

"That's shore clear to me," he said. "Yore horse and saddle? Say, Rance, where in —— was you that night?"

"Don't go barkin' at shadders," advised Rance.

"A-aw, —— yuh, Rance, I didn't mean that. Can't yuh prove where yuh was?"

"Nope. Anyway, nobody asked me yet. Remember that Slim and his two deputies ate breakfast with us that mornin'? They'd jist found the horse and saddle."

"Well, why in —— didn't they arrest yuh, Rance?"

"Because they don't know where I cached that money."

"Well, I'll be ——!"

"And as long as I won't come out and tell where it is, they're scared to arrest me. Anyway, that's what Jim Langley told me; and he got it from Merkle."

Chuckwalla tugged at his mustaches, his eyes half-closed in deep meditation.

"What's yore opinion, Chuckwalla?" asked Rance.

"Don't never tell, Rance."

"I won't," Rance assured him warmly.

"That's the stuff. Didja see Angel in town?"

"I didn't see him, but he's there. The Eagle is closed."

"I'll betcha. You shore took the conceit out of him, Rance."

"Did I?"

"And close to eight thousand along with it. Take off that shirt and I'll wash it for yuh. Say, didja meet them two strange punchers?"

Old Rance peeled off his shirt and handed it to Chuckwalla.

"Yeah, I met 'em."

"So did I. That feller ain't nobody's —— fool. Me and him sets down on the sidewalk, and it ain't more 'n five minutes before I finds m'self tellin' him all about you and Angel and Lila. Fact yuh hadn't ought to wear a shirt so long, Rance. Not over six weeks, at the outside.

"I dunno what this Hartley wanted to know so much for, and he didn't tell me. He looks plumb through yuh. Three times I started to lie to him—and quit. He talked with Angel. Yeah, he told me he had. Jim Parker took sort of a likin' to him and his pardner and invited them up to supper. I heard that Stevens won two hundred dollars at the Red Arrow saloon the other day.

"I'll never git that neck-band clean, Rance. If you'd wash yore neck once in a while—"

"What did this Hartley person want to know?" interrupted Rance.

"Oh, jist a few things. F'r instance, he wanted to know how it comes that you have seventy-five hundred dollars, win close to eight thousand more—and then have to borrow money from the bank."

Chuckwalla sloshed the shirt around in the water, and held it off at arm's length, looking at it critically. Old Rance peered at Chuckwalla, his grizzled eyebrows almost concealing his eyes.

"He asked yuh that, did he?" coldly.

"Shore."

"What did you say?"

"Nothin'. What in —— *could* I say? I didn't know yuh did, Rance."

"I didn't know that things like that was anybody's —— business!"

"They are, when yuh git famous, Rance."

"Famous, eh?"

"Or notorious."

"That's a better word. I'm goin' to town, Chuckwalla."

"Thasso? Mebbe I'll go with yuh."

"You better stay here, I think."

"Yuh think so, do yuh?"

Chuckwalla wiped his soapy hands on his overalls and spat thoughtfully.

"I think so," nodded Rance.

"You think agin', Rance. Yo're aimin' to make a fool of yoreself, old-timer. Oh, I can read yuh like a book."

"I'm not goin' to start anythin', Chuckwalla."

"I know. That's jist yore polite way of sayin' that yuh won't shoot anybody from behind. You jist wait until I wring out them two pairs of socks and I'll be with yuh."

HASHKNIFE seemed to make no effort to find out more about Kid Glover. He and Sleepy seemed content to idle around the town, spending much of their time at the sheriff's office. They had met and talked with Lila, and Hashknife had talked at length with Angel, whom he found to be rather cynical and sarcastic. Hashknife put him down as a "bad boy." He liked Lila.

He found out that Billy DuMond was the one who had started the trouble in the McCoy family, and he tried to pump DuMond, but without any success. DuMond felt that he had already talked too much for the good of his health.

Slim Caldwell was making no progress toward the solving of the robbery. The Wells Fargo man was still in town, possibly waiting for something to turn up. Hashknife did not bother to talk with him. Merkle wanted Rance McCoy behind the bars, and did not conceal his wishes.

Butch Reimer had not been in town since Hashknife and Sleepy had arrived, but on the morning that old Rance and Chuckwalla decided to come in, Butch, DuMond and Dell Blackwell came to Red Arrow.

Slim Caldwell and Hashknife were together in the Red Arrow saloon when Butch and his two men came in. Hashknife thought Butch seemed a little surprized to meet him again. Butch's misplaced eyebrow drew down a little as he nodded to Hashknife and Slim. DuMond and Blackwell ignored them entirely.

"How are yuh comin', Butch?" asked Slim casually.

"Oh, all right," grunted Butch. "Fair enough, I reckon."

"Where's Kid Glover?" asked Slim. Butch frowned slightly, but answered readily enough:

"The Kid pulled out a few days ago. I dunno where he went."

"I wish I did," said Hashknife, leaning one elbow on the bar and looking directly at Butch.

"Thasso?" queried Butch. "Why?"

"On account of my gray horse."

"Yea-a-ah? What about yore gray horse, Hartley?"

"I want him, Reimer. You say yuh don't know where Kid Glover is, eh?"

"No idea."

"And yuh didn't recognize that bay horse, didja?"

"What in —— is this—a guessin' contest?"

"Right now it is, Reimer. It may change any time."

Butch Reimer blinked slowly, thoughtfully. He knew he didn't stand a ghost of a chance to bluff this tall, gray-eyed cowboy.

"Why didja deny knowin' that bay horse?" asked Hashknife. "Lotsa folks recognized it as Kid Glover's horse."

"Did they?"

"That's a fact, Butch," said Slim softly.

"Uh-huh."

Butch cleared his throat harshly and tried to grin.

"I'll tell yuh why I didn't say anythin'," he explained. "I didn't know Hartley. The Kid was with me a long time, and yuh don't usually throw down folks yuh know in favor of a stranger, Slim. At least, I don't. I'll admit that the animal belongs to the Kid. He quit his job and pulled out of the country, ridin' that bay horse. Naturally, I didn't want to put him in bad, so I said I didn't know the horse."

The explanation was entirely satisfactory to the sheriff, but not to Hashknife.

"He must 'a' been in a hurry," said Hashknife.

"I dunno a —— thing about it," said Reimer testily. "I've admitted that I know the horse; what more do yuh want?"

"The horse."

"Well, ——, I ain't got it!"

Butch shoved away from the bar and grew interested in the play at a roulette wheel. Hashknife smiled thinly, as he and Slim went back to the office. Here they found Sleepy, Scotty McKay and Jim Langley talking about the robbery.

"Even if a man had them diamonds—what could he do with 'em?" asked Langley. "Yuh can't sell 'em."

"Can't yuh?" laughed Scotty. "I could, y'betcha. I'd hop a train and take 'em East. You shore can sell diamonds in any big town."

"Yuh could do that, Scotty."

"Probably have to discount 'em pretty bad; but, at that, you'd have more money then yuh ever seen before."

None of them saw Rance McCoy and Chuckwalla Ike ride in. They tied their horses and went straight to the bank. Michael Hale, the cashier of the bank, nodded pleasantly at old Rance, but got a scowl in return.

"You told Merkel that I borrowed money, Hale," said old Rance accusingly. "I didn't know that was the way yuh done business."

Hale swallowed heavily. The old man's eyes were as hard as granite and the scars of his face showed white against the leather-brown of his skin.

"Why, I—I—he asked me about you," faltered Hale. "He wanted to know about your account here, and I—I told him you had closed it. He knew you lost twenty-five hundred, and he knew you drew—"

"And you told him I borrowed money, didn't yuh?"

"I—yes, I told him. He represents the law, and we—"

"That's all right, Hale. I jist wanted to tell yuh that yore bank won't never handle the money I stole from the Wells Fargo."

Old Rance turned on his heel and walked out, followed by Chuckwalla, leaving Hale to stare open-mouthed after them. Out on the sidewalk Chuckwalla turned fiercely on Rance.

"You —— old fool!" he snorted. "What didja say that for? Tellin' him yuh stole that money! My ——, you're shore gettin' childish, Rance!"

But Rance made no defense. He led the way to the court-house, and straight to Merkle's office. The officers of Red Arrow county had no office-boys, no stenographers to bar the way of anybody who wanted to enter their sacred portals.

The Wells Fargo man was in conference with Merkle when Rance and Chuckwalla came in. Merkle took one look at the two old cattlemen and wished he were elsewhere.

"Hyah, lawyer," growled Rance, ignoring the other man. "Understand yuh been connectin' me with the robbery of the train. I'm down here to make yuh put up or shut up. Yo're tellin' a lot of things about my business, Merkle. They tell me yo're scared to arrest me, 'cause yo're scared you'll never git the money back. And that's right, too. You slam me in jail and I'll never tell yuh where it is."

Merkle stared at the old man curiously. The Wells Fargo man seemed to see some humor in the situation, but said nothing.

"You—you admit doing it?" gasped Merkle.

"Don't need to, do I?" Rance laughed harshly.

"Will you sign a confession?"

"I'll sign nothin', Merkle. But I'll take a shot at you, as sure as ——, if yuh don't shut up about me. That's a fair warnin'. Put up or shut up."

"Why, I—I don't know what to say, McCoy."

"You've said about enough! C'mon, Chuckwalla."

They tramped out of the office and headed for the Red Arrow saloon. Some one told Billy DuMond that Rance was on his way, and DuMond went out via the back door. He had no liking to meet Rance McCoy again.

And then old Rance and Chuckwalla proceeded to get drunk. The old man drank recklessly, which was unusual for him. Slim Caldwell heard that the two men from the Circle Spade were drinking heavily, and he also had a report from Merkle and Hale.

Merkle wanted Slim to arrest Rance at once.

"He admitted his guilt, Sheriff. Regardless of the money end of the proposition, I demand his arrest. I'm not interested in the financial end of the thing, anyway. He threatened me in my own office, and I have a witness. The sooner he's behind the bars the better it will be for all of us."

"Well," said Slim sadly, "I reckon there ain't nothin' else for me to do."

Jim Langley, Jess Fohl and Roper Briggs had joined old Rance and Chuckwalla at the Red Arrow bar. Rance was getting drunkenly boastful.

"I've got 'em all fooled," he told Langley. "If they put me in jail, I'll never tell where the stuff is cached, *sabe?* Nossir, I'll never tell. Fill 'm up. Hundred and thirty-two thousand dollars. Sixty-seven thousand in jew'lry and diamonds. Whooee-e-e! And I won't tell anybody where it is."

"Yo're a —— old fool," said Chuckwalla.

"F'r not tellin'?"

"For talkin' about it."

Fifteen minutes later, when Slim Caldwell arrested Rance, the old man stared drunkenly at him and then tried to pull his gun. It was little trouble for Slim to take the gun away from him and start him toward the jail. Chuckwalla leaned against the bar, talking to himself, trying to understand what had taken place.

He finally got it straight in his mind, and the knowledge that Rance McCoy was in jail sobered him up. He got his legs functioning fairly well and headed for the office, finding there the sheriff's force, prosecuting attorney, Wells Fargo representative, Hashknife and Sleepy.

"I've come to git him," stated Chuckwalla, and then added seriously, "and I git what I aim to git, gents."

"You better go home, Chuckwalla," advised Slim kindly.

"And leave Rance in jail?"

"Naturally."

"Well, yo're a —— fool if yuh think so, Slim!"

"Well, yuh can't get him out," declared Slim.

"Thasso?" Chuckwalla almost jerked out one side of his mustache. "Think I can't, eh? By ——, I'll show yuh! Betcha forty dollars I do git him out. I'll take him out, if I have to dinnymite the —— jail. Don't git me mean, gents!"

"Go on home and shut up," advised Slim.

Hashknife took Chuckwalla by the arm and led him away, trying to explain that nothing could be done for Rance just now.

"But he never held up no —— train," wailed Chuckwalla. "Rance ain't that kind."

"Admits it, don't he?"

"Yea-a-a-ah! —— old fool! Oh, I dunno what to do."

"You better go home and think it over, Chuckwalla."

"Mebbe I better. Say, they'll take care of him, won't they?"

"Fine."

"Uh-huh. But I'm goin' to git him out jist the same."

Chuckwalla managed to mount his horse, and Hashknife gave him the lead-rope to Rance's mount, explaining that there was no use of keeping the horse in town.

"You tell that —— Slim Caldwell that I'm comin' back," said Chuckwalla. "I'm a man of m' word, by ——!"

Jim Langley and his two men were at the office when Hashknife returned, and there was considerable speculation over what Chuckwalla Ike might do.

"He's a tough old rooster," laughed Langley. "Yuh never can tell about his kind."

"He won't do anythin'," declared Slim. "And old Rance won't never tell anything. Yuh may convict him, Merkle, but you'll never find that money."

"That may be, but I'll take the chance. What else can I do?"

LATER on in the day Butch Reimer ran into Slim, and they discussed the arrest of Rance McCoy.

"I hope yuh didn't think I was tryin' to block the wheels of justice when I didn't identify that horse," said Butch.

"It was all right, under the circumstances," said Slim. "I kinda wondered, after the horse had been indentified."

"Hartley got kinda salty, didn't he?"

"Mebbe. Yuh see, it was his horse, Butch."

"Yeah, I know it was. But don't yuh know, he made me a little bit sore. He's kinda inclined to be cocky, ain't he, Slim?"

"I don't think so. And it might be worth yore while to know that he's a bad jigger to get funny with, Butch."

"Yeah? How do you know all this? Did he tell yuh?"

Slim shook his head quickly.

"He'd be the last one to do that, Butch. I merely know these things from his reputation."

"Uh-huh. Got a reputation, eh? Gun-man?"

"Nope, not exactly. But he's shore sent a lot of gunmen down the trail. Didja notice them gray eyes of his? He looks plumb through yuh. If he ever asks yuh a question, you better give him a square answer, Butch. God pity Kid Glover, if he ever comes back here again."

"I guess that's right," nodded Butch. "Do yuh reckon old Rance will confess?"

"No! All —— can't make him confess. And I don't see how Merkle can convict him on the evidence. There's not a —— thing, except that dead horse; and that ain't no real evidence. Of course, I don't know how the jury will look upon the fact that the saddle was recovered and the brands stripped off the dead horse. But they'll never get that money back—not a bit of it."

"I don't think they ever will," agreed Butch.

THAT night Jim Parker seemed unusually serious during supper. Lila noticed that he looked often at her, and there was a gloomy expression in his eyes. Lila knew Rance McCoy had been arrested, and she wondered whether this had anything to do with Jim Parker's demeanor.

Mrs. Parker noticed it too, and finally she asked him whether he felt ill.

"Well enough, mother," he said slowly. "We had a meeting this afternoon—the school trustees."

Lila lifted her head quickly and Jim Parker was looking at her.

"It was two to one," he said heavily. "I done the best I could, Lila, but they voted me down. I hated to have to tell yuh, but they ask yuh to quit teachin'."

"To quit teaching my school?" said Lila, hardly believing her own ears.

Jim Parker nodded sadly.

"That's it, Lila."

"The very idea!" exclaimed Mrs. Parker. "Why, Jim?"

Parker shook his head.

"It was the things they've heard," he said. "They called Angel in on it. He repeated what was in that letter. That made no difference to me—but they're kinda funny. And after Rance was arrested—they thought they'd change."

"That letter about my—my father and mother?" asked Lila, a catch in her voice.

"Yeah!" snorted Parker. "One of them —— old fools talked about heredity. What does he know about it? Oh, I did the best I could, Lila. You can stay right here and live with us until yuh know what yuh want to do. We'd sure like to have yuh, Lila."

"Heredity?" whispered Lila. "He meant that—my mother was insane. Oh, that's what he meant!"

"Don't you believe it, honey," assured Mrs. Parker warmly. "Nothin' to it. I'd like to talk to them trustees."

"I talked to 'em," said Parker. "They're going to ask me to resign from the board. I'll be glad to, and I told 'em so."

Lila left the table and went to her room. Jim Parker filled his pipe moodily, and while Mrs. Parker was clearing off the table Slim Caldwell came. He had talked with one of the trustees about Lila, and he was mad.

Lila came down the stairs. Slim was almost incoherent in his wrath, and afraid Lila would blame him for the arrest of Rance McCoy.

"I staved it off as long as I could," he told her. "Merkle demanded his arrest and there wasn't anythin' I could do, Lila. Right now I'm lookin' for Angel. He talked with them trustees. You heard him, Jim. He didn't need to say the things he did. My ——, the things old Rance has done for the fool!"

"He's his son," said Lila wearily.

"And blood is thicker than water," quoted Parker.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Lila. "I mean about me. I'm sorry for him. I don't believe he ever robbed anybody."

"He practically confessed it," sighed Slim. "Told Hale he'd never put a cent of it in the bank."

"What does he have to say now?" asked Parker.

"Nothin'. Oh, he's sober now. He realizes what he's up against. Merkle tried to get him to talk, and he laughed at Merkle, when Merkle told him he'd let him off easy if he told where the money was cached. Then he got mad and cursed Merkle up one side and down the other."

"Has Angel been down to see him?" asked Mrs. Parker.

"No. Oh, he probably will—if I let him. Mebbe I won't. No use rubbin' it in on the old man. He'll have his hearing in a few days, and they'll bind him over to the next term of court. Merkle says he'll convict Rance."

"They tell me that old Chuckwalla was sore," said Parker.

"I guess he was! Swears he'll dynamite the jail."

"Well, look out for him, Slim," seriously. "He's capable of doing just that thing. What's this I hear about Kid Glover stealing Hartley's horse in Welcome?"

"It's true, Jim. The Kid left the Half-Box R and traded horses in Welcome. Nobody knows where he is now."

"Does Hartley expect him back?"

Slim smiled over the manufacture of a cigaret.

"Nobody knows, Jim. That tall cowboy listens all the time, and when he talks it's to ask questions. Pretty much of a human being, that Hashknife Hartley. Thinks a lot. Thinks about everything, I reckon. Well, I've got to be gettin' back, folks. I was so danged mad, I had to come over and blow off steam."

"Thank you, Slim," said Lila, trying to smile. "It was something that couldn't be avoided. We'll all live through it. It was hard to believe at first, but now it doesn't matter so much."

"That's a good way to look at it," said Slim. "You know how I feel about it."

"And I appreciate it, Slim. Please don't tell Rance McCoy about it. He has troubles enough of his own now."

"I won't tell him, Lila. Be good, folks."

It was nearly dark when Slim opened the gate. A man was coming toward him, and he looked up to see Angel McCoy, evidently coming to the Parker home. Neither of them spoke. Angel reached for the latch of the gate, but Slim swayed in front of him. And without any preliminary motions of any kind, Slim smashed Angel square on the point of the chin with his right fist.

It was a knock-out punch, perfectly timed and executed. Angel simply folded up and went sprawling in the dust. Slim looked at him for several moments, turned and went on toward his office, trying to rub some feeling back into his right-hand knuckles.

Angel was "out" for more than a minute. He finally got to his feet, braced himself against the fence and waited for his mind to clear. He had intended having a talk with Lila, but just now his jaw was half-paralyzed and there was a chunk of skin missing from his closely shaven chin. As soon as his legs would permit of safe locomotion he went back toward the main street.

IT WAS about nine o'clock when Chuckwalla Ike came back to Red Arrow. He was cold-sober and wanted to see Rance McCoy, but Scotty McKay, alone in the office, refused his request.

"I have an or-rder to let no one see him," said Scotty. "Ye might come tomorrow, Chuckwalla."

"Yeah, I might," agreed Chuckwalla, and went away.

He had a drink at the Red Arrow, and it was there that he learned that Lila had been asked to resign as teacher of the Red Arrow school. It took Chuckwalla quite a while to digest this information, because of the fact that the bartender tried to explain heredity, which neither he nor Chuckwalla knew anything about.

"Anyway," declared the drink dispenser, "I hear them trustees decided that she wasn't the woman they wanted to teach the kids, so they fired her."

"I dunno what in —— her ancestors have got to do with her learnin' the kids," said Chuckwalla sadly.

"Me neither. Have another drink?"

"I don't guess I will, pardner. See yuh later."

He left the Red Arrow and walked past a restaurant, where he saw Slim, Chuck, Hashknife and Sleepy busily engaged in eating their supper. For several moments Chuckwalla debated with himself whether to go in and talk with them or not. He finally decided not to, and went on.

For the first time since he had been in Red Arrow Hashknife talked at great length with Slim Caldwell about the robbery. Slim told him all about it, and answered questions until he became more interested himself.

"I dunno what yuh expect to learn," he declared, when Hashknife wanted all the details of the gambling incidents of the night of the robbery.

Slim went back several days previous to the robbery and told of old Rance's losing twenty-five hundred dollars in the Eagle.

"You don't think Angel had any hand in the robbery, do yuh?" asked Slim.

"I'd hate to say that. But isn't Angel the one who needed the money? Went broke, didn't he?"

"And he's still broke, Hashknife."

"Are yuh sure?"

"Well, he closed up his place."

"And old Rance borrowed money from the bank."

"Sure. But couldn't that have been a bluff? Why, we all know he drew seventy-five hundred from the bank; and he busted the Eagle. Don't tell me he's broke."

"Don't look as though he would be. You say the express messenger picked up his gun and emptied it at the robber after the robber left the car?"

"Yeah. Of course, he was shootin' wild in the dark."

"And one of his bullets killed the horse, eh? That meant that the robber would have to walk."

"It ain't over two miles to the Circle Spade ranch. We were over there that mornin', and old Rance had a big bump on his head. Looks as though a horse might have spilled him. He didn't have much to say. We didn't mention the horse to him, but it looks as though him and Chuckwalla beat it right down there and tried to destroy the evidence. Anyway, somebody was there ahead of Scotty, and danged near shot him. They held him off until they skinned out the brand and got away with the saddle."

"Looked as though there had been two men, eh?"

"Probably was."

"How about Chuckwalla the night of the robbery?"

"Pretty drunk—too drunk to do anything."

They finished their meal and wandered down to the Red Arrow. Business was not very brisk.

"Old Chuckwalla was here a while ago," offered the bartender.

"Sober?" asked Slim.

"So —— sober he refused a second drink."

"Have anythin' to say about Rance?"

"Don't think so."

"Where'd he go from here?"

"Dunno that either."

They sat down at one of the tables and had a smoke. Hashknife noticed that Slim's right hand was bruised and swollen a little, and that Slim kept it concealed as much as possible.

Later on they sauntered back to the office, and found it in darkness.

"Scotty must 'a' gone to bed," said Chuck. "He's shore a sleepy son-of-a-gun."

The door was unlocked. They walked in, and Slim headed for the table, intending to light the lamp, when he tripped and fell sprawling across the floor.

"Why don'tcha pick up yore feet?" laughed Chuck.

"Light the lamp!" cried Slim, picking himself off the floor. "By ——, I fell over somebody!"

Hashknife quickly scratched a match and stepped over to the table, and lighted the oil-lamp. Stretched out on the floor, between the table and the door, was Scotty McKay, with blood oozing from a bruise on his head.

As they stared at him he groaned and tried to lift himself up. Quickly they placed him on a cot, and Slim ran to the jail door, which was sagging open. The cell was empty. Rance McCoy was gone.

Slim came back and looked at Scotty, who was staring blankly at them and trying to touch his head.

"Rance is gone," said Slim. "How bad are yuh hurt, Scotty?"

"What in —— happened?" asked Scotty painfully.

"What do you know?" asked Slim.

Scotty looked blankly around, shaking his head.

"I dunno, Slim. ——, I'm all blood! Who hit me?"

"There's some whisky in my desk, Chuck," said Slim.

Chuck got the bottle and gave Scotty a big drink. It brightened him up quickly.

"I was at the desk," he told them. "There was a noise outside near the door, so I went to see what it was. And then somethin' hit me, I guess. Gimme another dr-r-ink, Chuck."

Slim sighed and looked inquiringly at Hashknife, who was sitting on a corner of the desk, squinting thoughtfully.

"What do yuh make of it, Hashknife?"

Hashknife shrugged his shoulders.

"Chuckwalla Ike!" exclaimed Chuck. "By ——, he kept his word!"

"Looks like it," agreed Slim slowly. "You better go with Scotty to the doctor's place and get that head all fixed up. Can yuh walk, Scotty?"

"I don't walk on me head," retorted Scotty. "I'll be all right, Slim. I might have it looked into, though."

"Judgin' from your looks, it'll be easy to look into," grinned Chuck. "C'mon, old Painted Face."

"And when yuh come back stick around the office," ordered Slim. "I'm goin' out to the Circle Spade."

"And we'll go along," said Hashknife, after the two men had departed. "This makes me kinda curious."

"I hoped you'd go, Hashknife. I'm curious, too."

"What do you think of it, Sleepy?" asked Hashknife, as they saddled their horses.

"Fine!" grunted Sleepy. "This is action, cowboy. When they start knockin' officers down and bustin' jail, I'm feelin' good."

They mounted their horses and rode out to the Circle Spade. There was a light in the bunkhouse, but none in the ranch-house. They dismounted and sneaked up to the bunkhouse window; they looked in and saw Monty Adams and Steve Winchell humped over at a table, playing seven-up.

They walked back to the corral and sat down debating what to do. Slim did not want to go to the ranch-house and make a search. It might be productive of a lot of trouble, especially at night.

And as they sat there in the shelter of the corral fence, a horse and rider came to the ranch, dismounted near them, turned the horse into the corral, carried the saddle to the stable and then went to the ranch-house. It was Chuckwalla Ike. He lighted a lamp in the living-room and took it upstairs with him.

"Foxy old ——!" snorted Slim. "He was too wise to bring Rance out here. Now where in —— do yuh suppose he took him? Not to the Half-Box R, nor to the JML. He wouldn't have had time to go to the JML. I'll bet he stocked a hide-out in the hills."

"No use lookin' for him at night," said Sleepy. "We might as well go back to town and wait for daylight."

"Yeah, and he won't be so easy to take again," complained Slim. "Old Rance is a danged fine shot, and he knows every inch of this country."

They went back to their horses and rode to town. Scotty was in bed at the office, suffering not a little from the injury to his head. The doctor had taken three stitches in the wound. It meant that several days would elapse before Scotty would be wearing a hat again.

A search of the office showed that the keys to the main door of the jail and to the cell were missing. Slim had kept them in a drawer in his desk. Luckily Slim had one set of duplicates.

"It wasn't done by a stranger," smiled Hashknife. "The man who pulled that job knew where to find the keys."

"No, it was done by a friend, Hashknife," laughed Chuck. "A friend with a lot of cold nerve."

"And honest too," laughed Slim. "He kept his word."

IT WAS Slim's idea to keep a sharp watch on Chuckwalla. He believed that sooner or later Chuckwalla would go to old Rance. But Slim knew old Chuckwalla would be very careful, especially if he had any idea that the officers suspected him.

In order to look over considerable territory, in case old Rance should be hiding out in the country between the Circle Spade and the Half-Box R, Hashknife and Chuck headed straight for the Half-Box R, and Slim and Sleepy took the road to the Circle Spade.

Chuck knew of an old place, half shack, half dugout, hidden away in the hills between the two ranches. It had at one time been the winter home of a wolfer.

"Just stumbled on to it one day," explained Chuck. "Yuh never could find it unless yuh knowed just where to look. Old Rance might know where it is, and it would shore make a dinger of a hide-out."

They came to the rickety old bridge across the river, which was barely wide enough for two riders abreast. On the left-hand side of the bridge, about a quarter of the way across, lay a battered sombrero. Hashknife swung down and picked it up.

It was not a hat that would ordinarily be discarded, being a black Stetson, more trampled than worn. There was no name in it, except that of the maker. Chuck looked it over critically.

"Lotsa black Stetsons wore around here," he said. "Mebbe some of Butch Reimer's punchers got drunk and lost it."

Hashknife dismounted and stepped over to the railing. Thirty feet below him was a dry-wash, with here and there a clump of stunted bushes, piles of drift. Farther to the right was the river, only about sixty feet across at this time of the year.

Suddenly Hashknife leaned forward, looking almost directly down. Lying against one of the old pilings, half-hidden in a tangle of brush and drift, was the body of a man. Hashknife called Chuck, and together they looked down at it.

From that distance it was impossible to identify him, as he was partly covered by the bushes. They led their horses back to the end of the bridge and tied them to a tree; after which they worked their way down to the river level.

Chuck did not like dead men, so he allowed Hashknife to drag the body out of the tangle. It was Billy DuMond. A round blue hole in the center of his forehead showed them that his death had been no accident. Chuck squatted down on his haunches and tore up several cigaret-papers in trying to roll a cigaret.

"Hit square between the eyes," he marveled. "Somebody around here is a —— good shot."

Chuck didn't pay much attention to Hashknife, who was examining the body; he did not notice that Hashknife had taken some papers from DuMond's pocket. There were three envelopes containing letters which had evidently been carried a long time, and a folded sheet of paper.

Hashknife walked farther along under the bridge, as if searching for something more, and unfolded the sheet of paper. It was an inky scrawl which read—

> *I. O. U. Seventy-eight hundred dollars. ($7800.00)*
>
> *—Angel McCoy*

Hashknife stuffed the paper in his pocket and walked back to Chuck.

"What do yuh reckon we better do about this body?" he asked.

"Leave it here," said Chuck quickly. "Let Slim and the coroner handle it."

"Do yuh think we better ride down and tell Reimer?"

"Yeah, I s'pose we had. And then we can cut across the country and tell Slim. Who in —— do yuh reckon killed old DuMond, Hashknife?"

"Somebody did a good job of it, Chuck. Who wanted to kill him off?"

"Rance McCoy."

"I heard about that. How did he stand with Angel?"

"Oh, all right, I guess. They seemed to be friendly. Yuh see, it was DuMond who told Angel about Lila not bein' Rance's daughter. I reckon that's what made Rance sore at DuMond. Yuh heard about Lila losin' her job, didn't yuh?"

"Yeah. That was a shame."

They went back to their horses and rode to the Half-Box R, where they found Butch Reimer and Dell Blackwell saddling their horses.

"Billy DuMond is dead!" blurted Chuck, without any preliminaries. Butch stared at him curiously.

"Dead?"

"Deader'n ——."

Butch dropped his latigo and came over to them. DuMond had been with Butch Reimer a long time.

"Yuh might tell me about it, Chuck," said Reimer, looking from Chuck to Hashknife.

Chuck told them how they had found DuMond, and that he had been shot squarely between the eyes. Butch was visibly affected, and it seemed to Hashknife that there was fear in his eyes, for they shifted from face to face.

"If old Rance McCoy wasn't in jail—" he said, breaking off his sentence meaningly.

"Well, he ain't," said Chuck. "Somebody helped him break jail last night. They popped Scotty over the head."

Butch snorted disgustedly and hooked his thumbs over his belt.

"That accounts for it. Yuh won't have to look far for the man who killed Billy DuMond."

"Is Rance McCoy a murderer?" asked Hashknife.

"What do yuh mean, Hartley?"

"DuMond was murdered. His gun is still in the holster. The man who shot him shoved the gun almost against DuMond's head. And then he threw the body over the side of the bridge, hoping nobody would find it. But they made the mistake of leaving DuMond's hat on the bridge. Probably overlooked it in the dark."

Hashknife reached down inside his chaps and drew out the black Stetson, which he handed to Reimer. Hashknife was watching Reimer closely, and he saw his crooked lips twitch at sight of the hat.

Slowly he straightened it out in his two hands. Blackwell merely glanced at it. Butch cleared his throat softly.

"That's old Billy's hat," he said softly. "Poor old Bill."

"We better keep it," said Hashknife. "The sheriff will want to keep it, I suppose."

"What good is it to him?" queried Butch.

"Oh, merely a part of DuMond's personal effects. If yuh want it Slim will probably give it to yuh."

"Well, all right," grudgingly. "Where's Slim?"

"Lookin' for Rance McCoy," replied Chuck.

"Same here," grunted Butch. "You tell Slim my gang are at his disposal. Jist as sure as ——, old Rance killed Billy DuMond. Do yuh think he's at the Circle Spade?"

"Not a chance. He's too smart for that. If you fellers are goin' to town, don't touch the body. We had to drag it out where we could look it over. As soon as we get hold of Slim we'll have it taken to town."

Butch promised to keep away from it, and Hashknife rode away with Chuck, heading across the hills toward the Circle Spade. Hashknife was grinning to himself.

"What's funny about it, Hashknife?" asked Chuck.

"I was just laughin' to myself about Reimer wantin' to keep DuMond's hat as a souvenir."

"What's funny about it?"

"The fact that Reimer recognized it, Chuck."

"Well, he ought to recognize DuMond's hat, hadn't he?"

"Sure."

"Well, what's so —— funny about it?"

"Nothin' much, except that DuMond's head is not less than a seven and three-eights, and this —— black hat is a six and seven-eighths."

"Yuh mean it ain't DuMond's hat?"

"Not unless that bullet swelled his head a lot."

"Well, I'll be ——!" exploded Chuck admiringly. "Slim was tellin' me you were smart. Who'd ever think of comparin' that hat with DuMond's head? I'll betcha Butch Reimer thinks it's DuMond's hat. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!"

"Anyway, he got kinda sentimental over it," grinned Hashknife. "Whereabouts is that dugout yuh mentioned?"

"Oh, that's north of us now. I thought we better find Slim first and tell him about DuMond."

"I guess so. Is that dead horse out of our way?"

"Not much. We cross the railroad over here at Curlew Spur, and then we can foller up to where the horse is."

Fifteen minutes later they dismounted and looked at what was left of the Circle Spade horse. Coyotes and magpies had practically cleaned the bones of all flesh. Hashknife examined the skull of the animal, which was still covered with skin. The bullet had penetrated the animal's brain, and had gone through the skull. Hashknife examined the bullet-hole thoughtfully, and then walked to the fence and looked down at the tracks, which were at least twenty feet lower than the level where they stood.

"Make anythin' of it?" asked Chuck curiously.

He was beginning to respect Hashknife's powers of observation.

"Sometimes yuh can make a mountain out of a mole-hill, Chuck," replied Hashknife gravely. "Mebbe we better go and find Slim."

Slim had told them where to find him and Sleepy, and they were at the designated place, sitting in the shade of a stunted cottonwood, from where they had kept an eye on the Circle Spade ranch-house.

"Drawed a blank so far," Slim said, grinning. "Saw Monty and Steve ride away, but Chuckwalla ain't stirred."

"You tell 'em, Hashknife," said Chuck, as they dismounted.

Hashknife told Slim how they had discovered the body of Billy DuMond beneath the bridge, and the sheriff's eyes widened. He had known Billy DuMond a long time.

"Rance McCoy!" he gasped. "He's been gunnin' for DuMond. By ——, he got loose, waited for Billy on that old bridge and nailed him!"

"Tell 'em about that hat," urged Chuck.

Hashknife grinned as he related the conversation between himself and Butch. He gave Slim the hat. They looked it over for identifying marks, but found none. The size was plainly marked on a sticker under the sweat-band.

"I never paid no attention to the size of DuMond's head," said Slim.

"When yore life depends on noticin' things, yuh get the habit of seein' 'em," said Hashknife gravely. "Did any of yuh ever see old Rance McCoy wearin' a hat as big as this one?"

None of them had.

"It shore ain't the one he had when he was in jail," declared Chuck. "That one was an awful old wreck."

"Did Billy DuMond have any money?" asked Hashknife.

"On forty a month?" grinned Slim.

"Was him and Angel McCoy good friends?"

"Always have been, I reckon."

Hashknife straightened out the black sombrero. It was not the type of hat an old man would buy. It was one of the size known as "five-gallon," and of a rather expensive finish.

"Cost about forty dollars," said Hashknife. "I had one almost like it a few years ago. Wore it on Sunday. The jigger who owned this hat was kind of a dude."

"Which shore lets out Rance McCoy and Billy DuMond," laughed Slim. "I know —— well DuMond wouldn't spend a month's salary for a hat. The question is—will we gain anythin' by waitin' for Chuckwalla to make a move?"

Hashknife shook his head slowly, still eying the hat.

"I don't think so, Slim. There's more behind this than we think. It's commencin' to brew a little. Crooks always make mistakes. And every time they try to rectify one they make another. Don't believe what yuh see, because it might be made to look thataway."

Slim squinted at Hashknife, as if trying to read behind those level gray eyes.

"Hartley, have yuh struck a trail?" he asked.

"The makin' of one, Slim. The blazes ain't so danged plain yet—but they're blazes, just the same. Let's go back to town and get a rig to haul DuMond in with. We'll let Chuckwalla do as he pleases today. If he had old Rance hid out in the brush he wouldn't visit him in the daylight."

"That's right. We ain't got much sense."

"Not too much, Slim."

"NO SUCH —— thing! Yo're crazy as —— all of yuh!"

Old Chuckwalla fairly danced up and down on the sheriff's office floor and his mustaches bristled angrily. He shook a gnarled fist at Slim Caldwell.

"You ——, long-legged gallinipper!" he roared. "You accuse me of bustin' yore —— hen-coop of a jail, do yuh? You think I let Rance McCoy out, eh? I'd shore crave to know where yuh got that idea."

It was the day after they had found DuMond's body, and Chuckwalla had just been told that Rance had been delivered from the jail. Slim had come out openly and asked Chuckwalla where he had taken Rance. Of course the old man was properly indignant.

"You swore you'd bust the jail," reminded Slim.

"Uh-huh. Shore I did. I was mad—and drunk. But I never done it, Slim. Honest to God!"

"Then where in —— is he?" demanded Slim. "If you didn't take him out, who did?"

Chuckwalla waved his arms helplessly. "How'd I know?"

Slim turned and looked at Hashknife, who was smiling at old Chuckwalla.

"What do you think, Hashknife?"

"Oh, I dunno. You know Billy DuMond is dead, don'tcha, Chuckwalla?"

"Heard he was. That ain't nothin' to tear a shirt over. This —— country would 'a' been better off if DuMond had been strangled in infancy. Blame Rance for it, don'tcha? Sure, yuh would."

Chuckwalla glared indignantly and backed to the door.

"Where are yuh goin'?" asked Slim.

"To hunt for Rance McCoy. Somebody's got to find him—the sheriff's office is full of —— incompetent chair-warmers."

"Where are yuh goin' to look?" asked Chuck.

"That's none of yore —— business."

He went up the sidewalk, tramping heavily, his spurs rasping on the worn boards. Slim shrugged his shoulders wearily and leaned back in his chair.

"Now what do yuh think, Hashknife?"

"The old boy seemed very emphatic, Slim."

Hashknife walked to the door and looked up the street. He saw Lila enter Parker's store.

"I think I need some tobacco," he said, and left the office.

He met Lila at the store entrance. She was taking some packages down to Parker's house, so he walked along with her.

"Things are breakin' kinda bad for yuh, ain't they?" asked Hashknife.

Lila nodded. It seemed to Hashknife as if she did not want to talk about it.

"You heard about DuMond's death?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Do yuh think Rance McCoy killed him?"

"Not if he was murdered as they say he was. Rance McCoy would have killed him in a fair fight."

"They think Chuckwalla took him out of jail."

"I know they do. But I don't believe it. Chuckwalla talks a lot. He's just a big-hearted old man, rough on the outside. He wouldn't hit Scotty McKay, unless it was in a fair fight."

"You don't dislike Rance McCoy, do you?"

"Dislike him?"

Lila turned her head away, but not too quickly for Hashknife to have seen the tears in her eyes.

"I don't dislike him," she said wearily. "I was hurt and sick over it all. It seemed so unfair that no one had told me who I was—and what I was. You don't know what it means, Mr. Hartley. And now they've taken my school away."

"Yeah, I heard about it, Lila. I'm callin' yuh Lila because everybody else does."

"That's all right."

They stopped at the Parker gate.

"I've heard that Rance McCoy and his son never did hitch very well," said Hashknife.

"Not very well," admitted Lila. "They've always been at sword's points, even when Angel was a little boy. Rance McCoy has always stood by Angel, even when Angel deserved severe punishment, but there never seemed any love between them. Even when Angel and I were little, he used to take Angel's part against me."

"Case of blood bein' thicker than water, eh? Oh, I didn't mean to say that, Lila."

"But it is true."

"Yeah, I reckon it is."

"Do you believe in heredity?" Lila was painfully serious now. It was a question that hurt her to propound.

"Heredity? If yuh mean physical forms, color, disposition—yes. If yuh mean inherited vices, physical failings—no. Horse stealin' don't necessarily run through a family. Preacher's sons don't usually make preachers. Blindness ain't inherited, so why should any other physical ailment be? I knowed two weak little folks up in Montana that raised a heavyweight fighter. But yuh can make yore own heredity, Lila—most folks do."

"You mean—thinking about it?" anxiously.

"Thinkin' the wrong way about it."

"But—but what if other folks think against you?"

Hashknife laughed softly and shook his head.

"That's an Injun idea, Lila. Never admit that yore medicine is weaker than that of the other feller. Yore mind is the only one that can hurt you."

Lila sighed and shifted her packages.

"Anyway," she said, trying to smile, "your theory is worth thinking about."

"It's worth usin'," seriously. "I know, because I've shore used it. You quit worryin' about yourself—and about anythin'. You've done no wrong; and when yo're right, yuh don't need to worry about anythin'."

"Perhaps that is right. Oh, I hope everything will come out right for Rance McCoy. Slim Caldwell likes you; he told me he did."

"Well," grinned Hashknife, "that makes two folks he likes, Lila, 'cause he didn't need to tell me who the other was."

Lila blushed quickly and hurried toward the house. At the porch she turned and waved to Hashknife, and he knew she was smiling.

He went back to the office. The doctor was dressing Scotty's head. Slim had gone up the street, but Chuck and Sleepy were still there.

"Let's go down an take a look at the shack we didn't see yesterday," suggested Hashknife.

Chuck quickly agreed. They took a pair of rifles from the sheriff's gun-rack, saddled their horses and headed out of town, after leaving word with Scotty to tell Slim where they were going.

They took the road which led to the Half-Box R, crossed the bridge where they had found DuMond's body, and then swung to the left, following the river.

Chuck knew the location of the hidden shack, and led them straight to it.

They dismounted at the entrance, in a space possibly twenty feet long, of fairly bare ground. There were horse-tracks here, and Hashknife squatted on his heels to study them closely, while Sleepy and Chuck kept an eye on the sagging door.

"C'mere, Sleepy," said Hashknife. He pointed a forefinger at a track in the dusty earth. In fact there were two tracks close together, apparently made by the same animal, but one track showed a smooth shoe, while the other mark plainly showed a calked shoe.

"The Ghost!" snorted Sleepy. "Yessir, that's him."

"Yore gray horse?" queried Chuck.

"Yeah," nodded Hashknife.

"Yuh mean to tell me yuh know the footprints of yore own horse, Hashknife?"

"I ought to—I shoe him myself, Chuck. Notice that track? That's his left front foot. Put a toe-calk on that foot and he'll stumble badly, so I always shoe him with light calks on the rest and leave that one plain. But the worst of it is, we don't know how long ago these tracks were made. A track would look fresh a long time in that dry earth."

The cabin was practically a dugout, with dirt walls. The floor, too, was of dirt. At the rear was a small fireplace, and the rusty old stovepipe barely cleared the top of the brush on the slope of the hill.

There had not been a fire in the dugout for a long time, and the only sign of occupancy was an empty bean can, still containing a few fairly fresh beans, and on the dirt floor were a number of cigaret butts. Hashknife examined them and decided that some of them had been smoked but a short time ago.

The men came back to the sunlight and mounted their horses.

"Somebody's been here lately," decided Hashknife. "And that person ate canned beans, smoked cigarets and rode my horse. If Kid Glover stole my horse and still rides him, he came back from Welcome instead of keeping on goin'."

"He'd probably know about this dugout," said Chuck. "The Kid was here quite a while, and lots of the Reimer stock range through here. I wish I knew why he stole yore horse, Hashknife. He probably don't know whose horse he got, and I don't think it would make any difference to him if he did. The Kid shore is a cold-blooded person, and if he's got any conscience at all, I'm an evangelist."

"Let's ride over to the Half-Box R," suggested Hashknife. "Butch Reimer might have some word of Glover."

"He wouldn't give the Kid away, Hashknife. But we'll ride over, anyway. Yuh never can tell."

But they were spared the ride. As they struck the road below the bridge they met Reimer and Blackwell, traveling toward town.

"Hyah, cowboys," greeted Butch. "What do yuh know?"

"Not much," smiled Hashknife. "Ain't seen anythin' of Kid Glover, have yuh?"

A queer expression flashed across Butch's eyes, as he looked quickly at Hashknife.

"Haven't seen him. Have you, Hartley?"

"Nope. But if he's ridin' my gray horse, he's been around here lately."

"How do yuh make that out?"

"Found the track of my horse."

Butch laughed shortly.

"Yuh don't mean to say yuh know the track of yore horse, do yuh, Hartley?"

"Yeah. Shod him myself, Butch."

"Oh, yeah."

Butch drew the brim of his hat farther down over his eyes as he looked out across the broken hills.

"Kinda funny, ain't it—him comin' back?"

"What's funny about it?" demanded Butch. "It's a free country."

"Pretty free," admitted Hashknife.

They bunched together and headed back toward Red Arrow. Hashknife would have given much to know what was going on behind Butch's little eyes, which seemed busy scanning the road and the surrounding country. There was little conversation. Hashknife was doing a bit of thinking himself. Blackwell talked to Chuck and Sleepy, but seemed to avoid Hashknife.

"Inquest tomorrow," said Hashknife, breaking a long silence between him and Butch.

Butch nodded shortly.

"Bury Billy in town, I reckon. Got no relatives that I know about. I hope they git old Rance."

"Think Rance shot him?"

"Sure. He was the only man who wanted to kill old DuMond."

"But he wanted to kill him fair, didn't he?"

"If he had a chance. Billy was scared of him."

"And you think Rance McCoy deliberately murdered him?"

"I reckon that's what the jury will say."

"I suppose they will."

After a few minutes of deliberation, Butch turned in his saddle and looked squarely at Hashknife.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"I dunno," evaded Hashknife.

"I jist wondered. You've had so —— much to say about it. I believe in leavin' things like that to the sheriff and the court, and if the rest of the folks would do the same we'd be better off."

"Some folks would," agreed Hashknife meaningly.

"Some folks would what?"

"Be better off."

"Mm-m-m-m."

Butch touched spur to his horse and moved in beside Chuck, leaving Hashknife to bring up the rear. But the tall, gray-eyed cowboy didn't seem to mind. He grinned widely and began rolling a cigaret.

TO BE CONTINUED

Some Historical "If's"

BY HUGH PENDEXTER

BROWSING about in the minutiæ of history one comes upon an "if" which seems a very small hinge for an important historical event to swing upon. The veriest trifles often open wide the door for speculation.

The beginning of the Revolutionary War in the Boston zone affords several examples of how the commencement of the struggle might easily have taken on a different complexion if not for some of these small yet potent "if's." On the evening of April 18th General Gage started Colonel Francis Smith with eight hundred troops to seize military stores at Lexington and Concord. Early in the morning of the 19th Gage received word from Smith that the country was aroused and that he would need a supporting column.

Lord Percy was promptly ordered to lead the relief. Could he have set forth at the early hour which found him ready he could have covered the fourteen miles and joined Smith in time to greatly minimize the losses which resulted from "the hunting of that day."

But an idiotic, military red-tape "if" bobbed up to make history read as it does today. It happened that Major Pitcairn, seeking adventure, had gone with Colonel Smith as a volunteer. The relief troops included a detail of the Royal Marines, of which Pitcairn was commander. Gage's order for the Marines was left sealed on Pitcairn's table. It was forgotten, or not known, that Pitcairn was with Smith.

Percy's men were lined up ready to march before seven o'clock. Until nine o'clock they waited while officers worried over the possible breach of military etiquette in opening a sealed order addressed to a missing officer. Fully two hours were lost before the Gordian knot was cut.

Percy advanced but a few miles and encountered another historic "if." General Heath had commanded the Committee of Safety in Cambridge to destroy the bridge over the Charles between that town and Brighton. If the members of the committee had not been frugal souls, and if they had hidden the planks, or dumped them into the river, Percy would have been delayed until unable to afford succor to Smith's column. But the planks were left, neatly piled on the Cambridge side, and soldiers crossed on the string-pieces, promptly relaid the flooring, and the troops pressed on.

During this day Fate seemed to be conspiring against the Colonials to a certain extent. Or, rather, Fate offered opportunities which the Colonials did not grasp. The relief column entered Cambridge shortly after noon hour and found the village deserted except for Isaac Smith, a tutor in Dummer Academy. Up to this time Percy and his men knew nothing about the fighting at Lexington. Nor did Percy know which road to take of the several crossing at Cambridge. There were no sign-boards, and he was contentedly heading down the Phips Point road.

If the tutor hadn't been such a painfully conscientious fellow, Percy would have completely lost his way; and instead of relieving Colonel Smith's shattered forces he would have been hard put to get his own men back to Boston. But Isaac couldn't tell a lie. When asked about the road he directed Percy to Menotomy—now Arlington—where he arrived at one o'clock and for the first time learned of the fighting beyond.

Between two and three o'clock he came upon Smith's demoralized and badly punished troops. Even then, at dusk, if several hundred militia from Essex County had arrived a few minutes earlier the combined forces of Smith and Percy could have been cut off at Winter Hill from making Charlestown.

In Full Charge

By CLEMENTS RIPLEY

THEY had to abandon the *Henry T. Webb* on the night of the third day. Captain Waterman stood at the rail and checked the crew overside by the light of his electric flash, and the last boat to go was the black gang in charge of Mr. Duncan, the Scotch engineer.

Captain Waterman called the names:

"Anderson—Maartens—Ohlsen—Spinelli—Youmans—Cowey—" He paused and called the name again. "Where's Cowey, Mr. Duncan?"

With his leg over the rail the chief made a hasty count of the men in the boat.

"Must be he'll ha' gone in one o' the other boats, sir—likely the first. 'Twould be like him, the Frisco dockrat!"

Captain Waterman shook his head.

"I've checked every man that's gone overside. He's aboard somewhere."

A trimmer volunteered:

"I seen him a while back layin' at the foot of the focsle ladder. Tryin' to run a line of hose for'd, we was, an' I ast him to help. He says—"

"That'll do," said Captain Waterman. "Get your men clear, Mr. Duncan."

The chief pulled his leg back over the rail.

"I'll get him," he said.

"You'll obey your orders and get your men clear. The fire may reach those drums of gasoline any minute now, and I don't see fit to risk a boat's crew for Cowey. You've got your compass bearings—north by east. Stay on the beach where you land and wait for the *Sir Frederick* or the *Northumberland* to pick you up."

"Ye'll leave him then?"

"I'll attend to Cowey, Mister— lively now!"

"If you're goin' back for that —— bolsheviki," began the chief, "that—that sea-lawyer—"

"Mr. Duncan," the captain interrupted, speaking very clearly, "I'm responsible here, and when I give orders I want action, not argument. Get into that boat and get clear."

"But—"

"Jump!"

The chief knew Captain Waterman and he knew that tone. He didn't jump, but he went overside, grumbling and reluctant, but he went. Captain Waterman leaned over the rail.

"Get well away and don't wait for me. I'll bring Cowey in the dinghy."

THE BEAM of the captain's flashlight showed tiers of empty bunks, a litter of discarded clothes, old boots, leaky oilskins. Then it focussed on an outflung hand and arm and, presently, on the body of a man, flat on his back near the ladder. He stepped over to it, blinking a little, for the smoke hurt his eyes.

Cowey was breathing heavily. Beside him was a half-empty quart flask. Captain Waterman stirred him with his foot.

"Cowey! Wake up!"

There was no sign of life. He swung his foot back and kicked him in the ribs.

Shipwrecked among the Papuan Cannibals

The sleeper grunted and rolled over on his side.

The captain bent swiftly and applied his thumbs just under the man's heavy eyebrows. Almost instantly Cowey stirred and his hands went up in a half-conscious effort to brush away the thing that was hurting him.

"Gerradahere—unh! Wha' —— ya tryin' to do— murder me?"

Captain Waterman gave one last dig with his thumbs and straightened.

"Get up and get out on deck!"

Cowey rolled over again.

"Go ——! Done m'shift. Ca' make me work overtime."

"Get up!" The captain kicked him again. "The ship's afire, you fool. It may blow up any minute now."

"Well, 'tain' my ship—know m' rights. Hire a hall."

The captain kicked him again, swiftly and vigorously. "Cowey!" He slapped him first on one side of the face and then on the other and kicked him again. Cowey started up suddenly with a roar of rage.

"Get up on your feet and get out of here. Jump!"

The man recognized that voice and the tone at last. He stumbled to his feet.

"Aw' righ'—aw' righ'. I'm comin', sir."

"Get aft," said Captain Waterman with sudden mildness. "We'll take the dinghy."

GRAY fog. Swirls of gray where the oar blades dipped. Ripples of gray in the water overside. The creak of row-locks and the dreary drip as the oars came out.

Cowey, who was rowing, grunted and let his oars drift while he scooped up a double handful of salt water and doused it over his face and head.

His head ached now, and his muscles were dead and slack as the liquor died out of him. He had been rowing all night. He picked up the oars again and stared sullenly at the man in the stern.

Captain Waterman was bowed over the boat-compass between his feet, a slightly built, gray little man, something over sixty year old, with a lean, anxious face. His gray hair and mustache were clipped short, and his white, single-breasted uniform was neat and well cared for—a contrast to Cowey who wore a pair of frayed, dirty dungarees and a ragged undershirt.

For the past hour Cowey had been thinking, slowly and dully, and now he voiced his thought, the tone rather than the words conveying his irritation.

"Say, what's the matter with you spellin' me a while—doin' some of the work, huh?"

The captain raised his head and regarded him for an instant with a pair of hard, blue eyes, puckered a little at the corners. Cowey dropped his own and muttered something about turn about being fair play.

"Not now," the older man said. "Later perhaps. Pull your starboard oar a little. You're letting her swing off."

He bent over the boat compass again. Apparently he considered the incident closed.

Cowey obeyed mechanically, but his eyes were sullen. He watched his biceps and forearm muscles spring to the stroke and looked down at his torso and legs. He was six feet and weighed a hundred and ninety pounds—hard bone and muscle. He glanced again at the spare figure in the stern.

"Why not?" he demanded more boldly.

Instead of answering his question the captain asked him another—

"Can you steer a course, Cowey?"

"No, I can't steer a course." The tone was an imitation of the captain's own clipped, precise speech. "'Taint my job to steer. I'm an oiler, not a sailor."

"Then you'd better keep on pulling. Later, maybe, when the fog lifts and we're in sight of land, I'll shift with you."

Cowey jerked savagely at the oars. He was growing steadily bolder.

"Yeah, that's the way. You set back comfortable and take it easy while the worker sweats."

He glanced at the captain hastily, a little startled by his own outburst, but the latter was bent over the compass again as if he had not heard, and he went on:

"You may think so, like it was on the *Henry T. Webb*, but you're gonna find out different. You had me where you wanted me then, but now it's you an' me out here in a boat, and one man's as good as another. See?"

Captain Waterman said:

"Pull your starboard oar. You're getting off the course again."

For a moment their eyes clashed, the captain's hard and unwavering, the oiler's sullen and angry. Then Cowey jerked the bow around, muttering, and the other dropped his glance to the compass again.

"All right, I'll row—but it ain't because I'm takin' orders from you, see? It's because I want to get somewheres."

The oars dipped steadily as the little boat rode the sleek, oily swells. The fog shifted and swirled, lifting sometimes until they could see the gray crests and the drab valleys between for a rod or more, shutting down again so that it was hard to tell where air stopped and water began.

For a long time there was no word spoken. Then Cowey let go his oars and pointed to the small breaker stowed in the stern.

"Gimme some water," he demanded.

The captain nodded, got the breaker out, poured a tin cup half full and handed it to Cowey, who took it and glanced at it disgustedly. Then he deliberately flung the contents overside.

"I said, 'Gimme some water.' Fill it up."

Captain Waterman took the cup, poured out the same amount and drank it. Then he stowed the cup in its place again, while Cowey stared, speechless with bewildered rage.

"That was your allowance," he explained in answer to the look. "You'll get your next in an hour from now—Sit down, man, you're getting the boat out of trim."

"My allowance, hey?" Cowey half obeyed the order to sit down, crouching with his hands on the gunwales. "My allowance? What the —— you talkin' about?"

"It's my judgment to ration out the water. We'll probably make land shortly, but it's all the water we have, and I don't see fit to take chances."

"You don't see fit? Say, what 'n —— d'you think you've got to do with it?"

"Everything, Cowey." The older man didn't raise his voice, but he spoke very clearly and distinctly. "I'm responsible here."

"Responsible ——! Whadda you think you're responsible for? Where d'you think you are any way—back onna *Henry T. Webb?* Well I'll tell the world you ain't." Cowey laughed loudly. "You was responsible for the *Henry T. Webb*, maybe—before you went and lost her."

At the mention of his ship there was a queer, grim tightening of the lines about the old man's mouth, but his voice was level and even as he said:

"I'm responsible for you, Cowey. You signed the articles, and I'm responsible for you until you're discharged."

The big oiler thrust his heavy jaw, matted with a three days growth of beard, within a foot of the captain's own.

"You listen to what I tell you," he snarled. "You forget that captain stuff and forget it quick. The *Henry T. Webb's* lost and I'm through takin' orders from you. I ain't like these deepwater sailors. I know my rights, see? If there's any orders to give I'll give 'em—and you'll take 'em or I'll bust you wide open, un'stand? Now you gimme some water and do it quick before I come after it myself."

He half rose, towering over the little man in the stern, powerful, menacing.

With surprizing swiftness Captain Waterman picked up the water breaker and balanced it on the gunwale.

"If you move just one inch nearer," he said quietly, "this goes overboard. Now get back there and sit down."

Cowey hesitated.

"Yes, like —— you'd throw it overboard!" he sneered. "You'd be just as bad off as anybody." But he dropped back on to the seat.

Captain Waterman upended the breaker on the seat beside him, where he could knock it overside with a sweep of his arm.

"I would," he agreed, "but we'll come ashore today or tomorrow. Anybody can stand thirst for that long—and it won't be the first time I've suffered discomfort for the sake of keeping discipline."

He looked at Cowey steadily and meaningly.

"You knock that over and I'll knock you after it," the latter blustered, but he was careful to make no move that might be construed as an attempt to get at the breaker.

Presently he took up the oars again and pulled a dozen strokes in silence. Then:

"Responsible ——!" he growled. "You wait till I get you ashore. I'm a better man than you any day of the week."

"If you were," the older man told him, "the chances are that I'd be doing the rowing and you would be back here."

This was as near a retort as he permitted himself, then or later.

The oiler muttered—

"If I had my rights I would be."

"Pull on your port oar," said Captain Waterman. "Steady as she goes."

AN HOUR passed. Captain Waterman snapped the case of his heavy, silver watch and returned it to his pocket. Then, without a word, he filled the tin cup half full of water and passed it to the man at the oars.

Cowey took it with a snarl and, for a moment, it looked as if he would throw it over like the last. But in the end he drank it and went back to his rowing again.

The captain picked up a chip from the bottom of the boat, tossed it overside and watched it for the instant before it disappeared in the gray smother.

Then he nodded and said:

"That'll do. There's a current that'll carry us the way we want to go. You can stop rowing if you want to—take a rest."

The oiler stared at him sullenly and pulled with a jerk that lifted the bow half out of water.

"Whadda you think I am?" he demanded. "Think I'm gonna drift all over the South Pacific just to please you? Y'crazy."

The fog thinned a little, and a breeze rippled the sleek swells. Presently, low on horizon, a wan glow appeared, and then a pale, yellow globe—the sun, but hardly more luminous than an orange.

"I think it's going to lift," remarked Captain Waterman.

"I don't," snapped the oiler instantly.

But it did. Five minutes later the breeze freshened, little choppy seas began to slap the bottom of the boat. The mist tore to shreds and whipped away like rotten canvas in a hurricane.

Captain Waterman said, "There's the land," in the tone of one who completes a mathematical problem and demonstrates a certainty.

Cowey stared over his shoulder. He saw a narrow ribbon of white beach with a line of breakers and above that the blue of distant forests, the whole topped by bare, jagged peaks, half veiled by long streamers of mist. He turned back to find Captain Waterman already half-way out of his seat.

"All right," the old man was saying, "I'll take her in. You've had a long pull of it and I guess you're tired."

Cowey slumped back into his seat, scowling.

"Tired! Takes more'n a little rowin' to tire me." He bent to the oars again, glancing over his shoulder as he added, "Whadda you take me for? Think I'd trust an old half-witted guy to take me through the surf?"

The captain said nothing, but the thin lips under his gray mustache twitched in a peculiar, mirthless smile. Cowey grunted and glanced again at the shore line, his forehead creased as if in careful calculation. He knew, of course, that there was no surf worth speaking of, and he knew by that smile that the other knew it, too.

Nevertheless he made a great parade of swinging the bow out to sea and going in stern first in the most approved surfman's style, grunting and straining as the seas caught the oars.

"Don't worry," he promised between heaves. "I'll see you get plenty to do when we get ashore. I'm gonna take it easy and let you do some of the sweatin' for once."

The other nodded.

"That's fair. You've had a long pull of it."

"You bet it's fair!" aggressively. "And I'm gonna have my rights for once. It'll be different from bein' on the *Henry T. Webb*, with a coupla mates to knock folks 'round for you."

"I don't knock my crews around, Cowey," Captain Waterman said, pleasantly but positively. "I don't keep discipline that way."

"Well, there's plenty do," said the oiler between his teeth.

HE SHOT the dinghy in, skillfully enough, on the crest of a wave and they leaped overside, knee-deep, and ran her up through the backwash.

"Far enough," breathed the older man as they passed hightide mark, but Cowey, who had already let go, gripped the gunwale again and heaved her up another six inches.

"That suits me better," he announced. "I ain't gonna have her drift away again and leave me stranded."

"It's a good idea to be careful," the other agreed. "Well, here we are."

"You bet we are. And the first thing I'm gonna do is to drink all the water I want—see?"

He lifted the little breaker and tilted it over his mouth. Captain Waterman said:

"Certainly—plenty of water now. I noticed a stream a little way down the beach as we came in."

Cowey glared. Then he set down the breaker and spat. He said:

"——, this water stinks! Whereabouts that stream?"

The older man indicated with his hand.

"And say—you might take that keg along and fill it while you're there."

Deliberately the oiler kicked the breaker over so that the water ran out on the sand.

"Fill it yourself," he said, and turned on his heel.

He was back five minutes later, wiping his mouth.

"Path back there," he said. "Goes up inland, and where there's a path there's people. I've a good mind to go up and see."

Captain Waterman wrinkled his brows thoughtfully. Then he shook his head.

"Hardly worth while, I think. When they come to pick us up—"

"Pick us up? In this forsaken place? I s'pose you got it all fixed up, like gettin' us here, ain't you? Got a liner ordered, or one of these here pleasure yachts, ain't you? Who's goin' to pick us up?"

Captain Waterman sat down on the edge of the boat. He said:

"If you hadn't been drunk you'd know that we had an S.O.S. out on the radio. The *Sir Frederick* picked it up, and the *Northumberland* answered, a hundred and fifty miles south. One of them will be here shortly."

"When?" Cowey scowled angrily. The old man always had an answer to everything.

"Today or tomorrow I should think. The day after at the latest."

"Day after tomorrow!" He seized on the only point he could find as a grievance. "That's three days. Think I can live on beach sand?"

"Oh, take a brace, man!" It was the first time the older man's tone had been impatient. "You can do for a couple of days without food, can't you? Why plenty of people fast for ten days at a time for their health's sake. Do you good."

"Oh, would it? Well, starvin' to death for your health might be your idea of a good time, but it ain't mine, I'll tell the world. Maybe a little withered-up shrimp like you can do without eatin', but a man needs grub, see?"

Captain Waterman shrugged his shoulders. His face was drawn and tired.

"I don't say it's comfortable," he admitted, "but it isn't going to hurt you any. You say you're a man. Why don't you try to behave like one?"

"That's all right about my behavin' like one. You was the one got us here. You was keepin' the course—if you was keepin' any course at all and not just shootin' off your face to get outa doin' the work. Well, you say you're responsible. You picked this place an' I'm hungry and what are you gonna do about it?"

"What do you expect me to do? I don't carry a lazaret in my hat, Cowey. You can't expect everything when you're shipwrecked. You're lucky to be alive at all."

"Yeah, lucky to starve to death. Here you been blattin' for the past ten hours about bein' responsible, and your idea is to bring a guy out to this place with nothin' to eat. Why you—"

"Oh, snap out of it, Cowey." Captain Waterman rose wearily from his seat on the gunwale, reached into his hip pocket, and produced a flask. "Here—take a nip of this and stop whining."

Cowey's eyes flew open. He snatched the flask and pulled the cork with his teeth. Then he paused and scanned the label curiously. "What the ——"

"Yes, it's the same one you had aboard the ship. I thought we might need it and brought it along. Go slow," he added warningly, "that's all there is, you know."

Cowey paused long enough to eye him sourly.

"Well, it ain't any more'n I need."

He tilted it up and the liquor gurgled down his throat.

"Hold on, Cowey— That's enough, Cowey!" The old man stepped forward with his hand out.

The big oiler put out a long arm and brushed him aside without taking the bottle from his mouth, held him off until he had drained it.

"Ah!" he said, and tossed it, empty, into the surf.

The old captain looked at him levelly.

"You shouldn't have done that," he told him. "That was all we had. Now what are we going to do if one of us gets a chill?"

"We?" Cowey laughed unpleasantly. "Say, whose liquor was it? Did you ever give me a shot when we was back on the *Henry T. Webb?* Used to call me up after dinner, didn't you, and say, 'Cowey,' you'd say, 'you're a good guy—have a little shot with me.' Yes, like —— you would! Well things are different now, I'll tell the world. I got my rights and you can have what's left—if there is any."

Captain Waterman said nothing, but his slight shrug and the lift of his gray brows were more eloquent of his contempt and disgust than any words could have been. And they irritated the big oiler as no words could have done. The whisky was beginning to take hold, too.

"What's more," he went on loudly, "I ain't gonna set here and starve to death for nobody, un'stand? There's a path back there, and where there's a path there's people. I'm goin' an' find 'em, and get me a square meal."

Captain Waterman said in his thin, precise way:

"I don't see fit to have you leave the beach. I've told you that before, Cowey."

"You don't, eh? Well what you got to say about it, huh? Think I'm gonna starve to death to please you?"

"You won't starve in a day or two—three at the most. And you don't know anything about this island. I don't even know which of the group it is."

"No, I'll bet you don't; and if you ask me you never did have no idea of where we was goin' to land up. But I'm gonna find out, see? Where there's a path there's people, and where there's people there's grub."

He turned on the words as if to move off. Captain Waterman stepped in front of him and put out a detaining hand.

"Wait, Cowey. You don't know this country. That path is probably a native track, and these Papuans aren't to be trusted with a white man alone. They're still headhunters you know—cannibals even, if they get the chance."

Cowey stared at him a moment, then laughed loudly.

"Cannibals, huh? Say, ol' feller, this might be the first time I've shipped deep water but it takes more 'n a bedtime story to scare me. I've seen your cannibals at Tahiti and Samoa too—in white pants and straw hats, with wrist-watches."

"This isn't Tahiti or Samoa, Cowey, it's New Guinea or thereabouts, and your Papuan is a different breed of cattle. A dozen men might be perfectly safe, but one man alone— No, I don't see fit for you to go. And another thing—I'll not have a rescue party come up and then have to hunt for you all over the island. I'm responsible for you and I want you where I know where you are."

The oiler laughed again, a jarring, raucous note, and took a step forward.

"Say, I guess you think you're still on the *Henry T. Webb*, doncha? Cannibals, huh? Guess you been seeing too many movies." He liked the sound of that and repeated it, in high good humor with himself. "Too many movies—tha's how ya get tha' way. Poor ol' man—too many movies."

"He went off into another burst of yelling laughter and moved off a trifle unsteadily down the beach.

Captain Waterman stepped around him quickly and put himself in his way again.

"Cowey! You're drunk. Get up there and sit down in the shade—Cowey!"

The oiler stopped and blinked at the old man uncertainly. Then he took a step forward, and his face took on an ugly look.

"Whatcha think ya tryin' to do, huh?"

"Get up there out of this sun and sit down. You're drunk."

"Drunk, am I?" The tone became threatening. "Who says I'm drunk? Learn ya t' tell lies on me, —— ya!" He lashed out suddenly with his fist and the little captain, taken off his guard, went down as if he had been hit with an ax.

Cowey stepped back, startled and a little frightened. He hadn't meant to hit so hard, he told himself—just to give him a little shove to teach him not to tell lies on him— Oh, well, plenty of people had knocked him around and it never killed him. Teach the old man a lesson, maybe. Wouldn't be in such a sweat to keep a man out of his right next time.

He stared at the limp form a moment, blinking in the sun glare, and stirred it with his foot.

"Hey, wake up, ol' man— Aw righ', suit yourself then." Then his mood changed and he shook his head mournfully. "Poor ol' man—been seein' too many movies. Tha's how he got tha' way."

A moment later he ambled on up the beach, singing.

THE TRAIL was steep, a hard-packed, green tunnel that wound up and up. With his first ten steps Cowey was in another world. Great poisonous looking leaves brushed his shoulders, walling him in. The song stopped in the middle of a bar.

He plodded on. There was something funny that he had said or that the old man had said. Somebody. It was about the movies— Something funny. Anyhow he had laughed at it then, so he laughed now, a yelling, discordant burst that startled the heavy stillness.

He broke off abruptly. He hadn't noticed that it was so still—as if the walls of green had cut him off from everything. He stopped and cocked his ear towards the beach, hearkening for the slow roar and plunge of the surf, like wind in the trees at night.

He wished he had some one with him. If the old man had had any sense—anyhow he might yell or something. Then he remembered that he had left him stretched unconscious on the sand.

"Well, it won't do him no harm. Learn him that a worker's got some rights. Thinks he's still onna *Henry T. Webb* or somethin'."

The trail grew steeper. It twisted so that he couldn't see ten feet before or behind. "Like bein' shut in a room." And still it went up and up.

He thought, "Gotta come down some time," and he repeated it aloud, "Gotta come down some time. What goes up mus' come down. An' trail means people, sure."

That was the comforting thought that kept him from turning back:

"Trail means people, sure. White people most likely with plenty grub an' liquor. All these islands have trading posts on 'em. Sure—trading posts." Hadn't Dan Koveleskie, who'd shipped deep water, told him about it back on the docks in Frisco?

"That's the life," Dan used to say. "Layin' back in your hammick with brown girls to bring you the drinks. Pick out your island and start your tradin' post—if you got the price. Sure, them niggers is easy pickin's; six bits worth o' red cloth and a coupla fishhooks for anything they got. But ya gotta have cap'tal, an' how's a dock-walloper gonna get it? Sure—it's the rich gets it comin' an' goin.' "

Cowey slapped at a biting fly on his neck and cursed the hypothetical trader.

"—— him! Layin' in his hammick, an' me sweatin' myself to death on his —— trail. Whyn't he build it level—or downhill?"

He began to realize that he was victim of a rich man's conspiracy. Everything was a part of it—the hot, lifeless air that shortened his breath, the swarms of midges that fed themselves on the sweat of his arms and face. His legs were heavy, like the legs of a man trying to run in a dream, and when he sat down to rest the flies drove him to his feet again, slapping and cursing.

"—layin' in his hammick, —— him! Well, I'll have him outa there mighty quick. Grub an' liquor's what I want, an' don't you forget it! One time when the poor man's gonna get his rights—buildin' a trail like this that don't go noways but uphill."

An occasional flash of doubt he dismissed with:

"Tryin' to scare me with that stuff about cannibals—the ol' fool. Scared I'll give him a little trouble huntin' for me when the boat comes. He knows they're bound to find me—daren't go off without me. I'm a shipwrecked sailor an' I know my rights.

"Layin' in a hammick—

"And don't he know it, too—ony he thinks it's too good for a common hand, —— him!"

The growth on either hand began to thin out. Flecks of sunlight appeared in the path, and presently there was a patch of blue sky ahead. The sight put him in a little better humor.

"Gettin' to somewheres," he said with satisfaction, and hurried his pace a little.

Then only a few gnarled, misshapen hemlocks twisted up out of crevices in the bare rock, and a moment later he saw the top—twin pinnacles with a jagged notch between. The trail—if it could be called that now—led over a hundred yards of naked rock, marked here and there with a little heap of stones. It went directly into the notch.

"What goes up mus' come down," said Cowey, and stumbled on toward the top.

He reached the notch and turned to look back. The sea stretched, blue and sparkling, until it met the sky. Below, he could see the white strip of beach with the surf breaking against it. He even saw a speck that might have been a drift log, but which he knew was the boat. But of Captain Waterman he saw nothing.

"Ol' fool's gone to find him some shade to set in while he waits to be picked up," he told himself. "Well, let him have his fun. Me, I'm goin' on down an' find that hammick."

He had sat down for a moment's rest, but at the thought he heaved himself to his feet again.

"Here's where the down-hill starts," he announced as he went through the gap. "Goin' down-hill to that hammick—and by ——, there it is!"

Standing on the island side of the notch, he looked down into a bowl-like depression, four or five miles across, whose wooded sides rose to a ring of bare peaks like the one he was on. But what chiefly took his eye was a sizable clearing in the bottom of the bowl, filled with a cluster of round, thatched huts, something the shape of beehives. There was one, however, rectangular, with a ridged roof and gables, much larger than the others, that stood out over them like a mother hen over her chickens. This was the one, he decided, that housed the trader and his hammock.

"Cool and comfortable—that'll be me. And the ol' man sweatin' there on the beach, the —— ol' fool!"

The first hundred yards or so were bare of trees—a steep, boulder-strewn slope covered with sliding shale. Cowey considered a great rock, precariously balanced. "If that one was to start slidin'—zowie! Right into town."

He was tempted to start it, just to see what would happen, but he reflected that he was coming seeking hospitality. It was not any sense of gratitude for favors to come that made him refrain, but a purely practical realization that it would make a poor introduction. He wanted that hammock.

"An' just let him try to keep me out of it. I'm a shipwrecked sailor, and I know my rights."

The trail was very much like the one on the other side—green walls that brushed his shoulders at every step, and never more than ten feet in a straight line—twisting, turning. But this time he was going down, and neither the heat nor the flies nor his own weariness could depress his spirits much. He went down in a quarter of the time it had taken him to come up. The first few steps he took with a run and burst into the clearing.

IN A PATCH of shade thrown by the nearest hut an old woman, jet black and clothed only by a couple of plaited pads that hung before and behind from a girdle around her waist, squatted and pounded sago in a wooden trough. At sight of Cowey her club hung suspended in the middle of a stroke as if she had been turned to stone. Then she dropped it and fled, cackling shrilly.

For a moment her high-pitched outcry startled the stillness. Then a score of voices took it up and it spread through the village like a fire through cane. Black forms swarmed out of the houses. Black faces, streaked with white, indescribably hideous, peered at him around corners or through the flimsy thatch. Then, as suddenly as it had started, the shrill gabble stopped and there was not a soul in sight.

Cowey came forward uncertainly and called at random:

"Hey, you! Where's your boss?"

There was no answer. He caught a swift glimpse of a dark form as it slipped between two of the houses, and had a disconcerting feeling that he was being watched by a hundred pairs of unseen eyes. The dust of their flight had hardly settled. The handle of the club the old woman had dropped still glistened with sweat. But for all the sound there was it might have been a village of the dead.

He tried again.

"Sailor—me—" pounding his chest—"Shipwrecked sailor." He came forward a little, holding out his hand as one might to a stray dog. "Good feller—no hurt nobody. Where's your boss?"

He turned his head and was aware of a group that peered furtively from between two of the huts. He had not seen them appear; they were simply there. As he turned toward them they melted away again.

Cowey frowned.

"Boss!" he demanded. "Boss man—white man—master! ——, I ain't gonna hurt you."

There was no reply, but another group appeared at a little distance, and then another, eyeing him sullenly. He remembered what Captain Waterman had said. "Huh, cannibals, the —— ol' fool!" He twitched his shoulders angrily as if to throw off the heavy, creepy feeling in his spine. "Say, what the ——'s the matter with you? I ain't gonna hurt you. Talk up, can't you?"

His voice was swallowed up in the stillness. He dropped his arms helplessly. The thing was getting on his nerves, but he made another attempt, opening his mouth and pointing down his throat.

"Hungry, see? Eat—me—eat—" with elaborate pantomime—"me shipwrecked sailor—hungry. 'Merican sailor—good feller—no hurt nobody—"

They came a little nearer as he talked, furtively, poised for flight, but still they came. More appeared, and more. Still they stared without a word, silently, menacingly.

"Say, for ——'s sake whyn't you say something? Whatta ——'s the matter with you?" He glanced behind him swiftly. More were gathering there. "Where's you boss—you know, boss-man? Say, what's the idea?"

Still no word, but they were within arm's length now, closing in—hundreds of black, glistening bodies.

He spread his hands placatingly.

"Say, me good feller—I ain't doin' you no harm. ——, if I had me a gun—"

At that instant he stepped back—into a solid wall of flesh. And then panic took him.

He screamed and struck out at the nearest black face—saw it disappear—hit another, and burst through the crowd on a run.

Then pandemonium broke loose and they were after him whooping and screeching. He broke desperately for the path. A dozen of them sprang up out of nothing and headed him back into the maze of huts again, doubling, twisting like a rabbit before the hounds, while they hunted him forward in an ever narrowing ring until at length he burst from the concealing houses into the open and stood dripping and panting in the hard sunlight, surrounded by black faces on every side.

It was a clear space, something like a bullring. On one side he saw the great, rectangular *ravi*, the clubhouse. He had just time to realize that this was what he had mistaken for the storehouse of the white trader when the game began.

A lone black came toward him out of the ring of watchers, walking springily, like a wrestler, crouched forward, his body glistening in the sun. He circled warily, while Cowey turned fearfully to keep his face towards him. Then, like a flash, he dove for an underhold.

Cowey leaped aside with a cry of fear, and the other went headlong, to a burst of whooping and laughter from the rest. He was up again like the bound of a rubber ball and tried again, and again the white man dodged, snarling. He had begun to see what the game was, however, and he waited cautiously until the black made another attempt. But this time as he sidestepped he swung his heavy sea boot against the naked stomach.

The man landed in a crumpled heap, flopping helplessly, and at the same instant the big oiler flung himself at him with a roar, leaped into the air and came down with both heels on the black man's chest. He heard the crunch and snap of bones, the howl of the crowd and he kicked and stamped in a frenzy until three others darted into the circle, yelling shrilly, and drew him off the fallen man exactly as a bull is drawn off from a wounded toreador

They were more cautious after that. There were never less than two, and sometimes three or four in the ring with him, leaping and feinting, while the baited white man ducked and doubled and twisted, with the sweat running into his eyes and the fear of death on him.

The people in the crowd whooped hysterically and held their sides and gasped and chuckled with shrill merriment. Once a blind rush almost carried him through the cordon, but they tripped him cleverly with a spear shaft, and a dozen black hands threw him, kicking and fighting, into the circle again.

It was not all one-sided. Cowey was fighting with the rage and cunning of despair. More than one wild swing landed or a kick from a heavy boot went home, and a crippled savage crawled or was dragged out of the arena. But for every one that went out another came in, and presently the end came. He stood in the circle, beaten by the pitiless sun, chest heaving, knees shaking, arms limp at his sides. Three of them danced and feinted in front of him, and while they held him at bay, snarling, a fourth ran in from behind and threw him.

Then a black wave surged up from the sidelines and pounded over him. He was banged and battered, crushed by the weight of numbers, beaten breathless by hard, naked feet. Between terror and weariness he hardly felt them. He thought:

"Now I'm going to die. They can kill me, but they can't get me up again."

But he was wrong. He felt himself being dragged rapidly over the hard ground. He shut his eyes. Hands gripped him—lifted him—flung him—

He lay for an instant where he had fallen, his eyes shut. Then, hideously sudden, a stinging pain ran over him like liquid fire. They had thrown him into an ant-hill.

He leaped to his feet, screaming and slapping, a-crawl from head to foot with ants. A spear butt knocked him sprawling. He was up again— Another tripped him and threw him back into the hill.

"E-e-e-a-ah! ——! Lemme up—lemme! ——, if I get my hands on you—" Twice he charged the ring of grinning faces and went back headlong. "—— I can't stand it— I tell you I—e-e-a-a-ow—"

HE DIDN'T hear the shot, but he saw the black man in front of him whirl away as if a strong arm had hit him, spin and drop twitching across his spear. He blinked wonderingly, forgetting for the instant to slap at the ants that clung to his legs and body. He felt the sudden stillness—saw startled, black faces—rolling eyes—

And then he saw the grim, gray, little man with a pistol in his hand, and he lurched toward him, sobbing with relief.

A hand on his arm and a voice in his ear, clipped, precise, steadied him.

"Don't run—walk. I'll hold them. You go to the path."

He staggered off as the other pointed. Behind him Captain Waterman backed slowly, holding them at the muzzle of his pistol.

It was just as Cowey reached the path that the pistol cracked—twice. He whirled with a quick indrawing of breath in time to see one of them leap into the air and come down in a grotesque sprawl of arms and legs and another double up with his hands over his stomach and pitch forward. The rest disappeared between the huts, like rabbits.

The captain lowered his pistol and stepped back into the shelter of the trail. He said:

"It seems cold-blooded, but they've got to learn not to follow us too close. Go on."

Cowey broke into a shambling trot, but the captain said:

"Don't do that. Save your strength; you'll need it later," and he slowed, with a nervous glance over his shoulder.

"They'll follow, of course," he went on, "but that'll teach 'em to keep their distance." He jerked a thumb at the tangled wall of foliage. "They can't shoot an arrow through that. We're safe enough as long as we keep going."

Cowey heard the words and nodded, but they meant nothing to him. For the past hour the thinking part of his brain had been paralyzed, and he had been guided by brute instinct—the instinct to run while he could and fight when he was cornered. He was still quivering all over like a frightened horse. But gradually as he slogged on up the steep trail, hearing the thin, precise voice and glancing back occasionally at the little gray man who walked so quietly, swinging the heavy pistol in his hand, he steadied down and began to turn things over in his mind.

"How come you to come after me?" he demanded at length, filled with a dull wonder.

The captain stopped a moment at the end of a straight stretch of trail, his pistol poised, watching the back track.

"I knew you'd get into trouble," briefly.

"I wouldn't have thought you'd care if I did."

"That's part of my job—to take care of my men."

"You—you'd have had a —— good right to shoot me back there on the beach," said Cowey humbly. "If I'd known you had a gun—"

"I don't carry it to use on my crews, Cowey."

The oiler digested this for a time. They plodded on up the steep path. The air was hot and moist—lifeless. There was no sound but the impact of their own feet and Cowey's heavy breathing, but still at intervals the captain stopped at a turn and waited with raised pistol for what might come.

Presently Cowey said—

"Looks like they'd give us up."

The other shook his head.

"They won't be far behind, but the hardest thing in the world to see or hear is a Papuan, when he doesn't want you to. I know something about them. They'll rush and fight like cats if they're frightened enough, or if they think they've got it all their own way. But they won't try anything now unless they think they've got a chance to put an arrow into one of us."

Cowey twitched his shoulders uncomfortably.

"S'pose they was to head us off."

"They might, but I don't think they can travel fast enough through this brush if we keep going."

The oiler drew his breath slowly between his teeth.

"It looks like I'd played ——," he admitted.

"You've given me a good deal of unnecessary trouble," Captain Waterman said.

That was the last time they spoke until they reached timber line.

COWEY stared fearfully at the stretch of bare, sizzling rocks ahead of them. Captain Waterman was explaining:

"That boulder ahead and a little to the left—see it? That's your first point, then. After you get your wind jump for the one above it. Then a little farther up and to the right—"

Cowey thought—

"Like he was tellin' how to unload a cargo of lumber—way he talks."

The blood was pounding in his temples. He strained his ears for sounds from the forest behind and licked his lips unhappily.

"Yes, sir, I got it."

"All right, then."

They crouched at the edge of the timber. The captain gave the signal. Cowey took a deep breath and darted forward.

It was done so quickly that he had covered three-fourths of the distance to the first boulder before anything happened. Then a yell broke from the forest and a storm of arrows ripped through the leaf screen. He flung himself over the top of the rock and lay there, panting and gasping, while the yells redoubled and the bamboo shafts pattered around his hiding place. Some yards away, and a little farther down the slope, he saw the little captain, crouched behind a boulder, and as he looked the old man flickered out and reached one a little higher up.

Cowey raised his head incautiously and jerked it back as an arrow hissed past his ear. They were falling all around him now. One glanced off his foot. He stared at the furrow in the heavy leather of his sea-boot, and then at the vicious, barbed thing—tipped with splintered bone. That would rip through a man— He shuddered and crouched lower.

The captain signaled him to go on, once, and again, peremptorily. He thought:

"Wait, can't you—wait till they stop shooting? I'll count five and then I'll go," and he began very slowly, "One—two—three—four—fi—"

An arrow dropped within six inches of his hand, and he stared at it, wide-eyed, and drew in his breath with a sharp hiss. He gulped. The sky and the sun-scarred rocks and the twin, jagged peaks swung slowly up and down. He shut his eyes—screwed them up tight—

"Five—six—seven—eight—"

Something had him by the shoulder, shook him, pulled at him. He tried to brush it away. Then he opened his eyes and saw Captain Waterman. He wondered how he had gotten there.

The captain said—

"What—what did you say?"

And Cowey said—

"Ninety-seven—ninety-eight—ninety-nine—"

He watched the other swing his pistol up and deliberately crack the barrel down across the back of his hand. There was an instant of sick pain, then everything blurred. Then the sky and the rocks and the peaks snapped back into their proper positions again, and he saw that terrible little gray man raise the pistol for another stroke. He snatched his hand away.

Captain Waterman nodded.

"That's better. Get ready now—never mind how I got here—jump!"

Then he was half-way to the next cover, scrambling desperately among the loose stones, arrows hissing and flickering around him, slipping—stumbling—until at length he dove and landed, half stunned and breathless, but safe.

He lay there a moment, gasping and reaching among the stones. Then he looked himself over, curiously, moving his legs—flexing his arms. The broken skin on the back of his hand caught his eye, and he grinned—

"Not so bad—"

Then, at the risk of being hit he put his head over the top and waved derisively.

"Hey—you're a bunch of rotten shots!"

FROM below Captain Waterman signaled him to go on again. He nodded, ducked coolly as a shaft whizzed past his head, and a moment later had made another advance safely.

That brought him out of any real danger. He thrust his head up and watched the old man crouch, saw him throw himself forward, scramble half-way to safety —and go down in a heap.

He was up again, took two staggering steps and went headlong. There was a burst of yells from the woods. A black figure appeared—ridiculously small and active, like a dancing doll. It bounded up the slope while Cowey shouted and dug his nails into his palms. Captain Waterman was crawling on his hands and knees—slowly. The Papuan seemed right on top of him when he turned, took careful aim and fired.

The black figure came straight on. Cowey thought—

"He's missed."

And then the native collapsed like a punctured bladder and the old man dragged himself behind the protecting boulder and fell forward weakly. It was all unreal, somehow, like the picture on the finder of a camera—the naked, scorching rocks, the black patch half-way down the slope, the old man with his lean face twisted with pain and the red on his white trousers, lying behind the rock, gripping the heavy blue pistol.

He heard him, weak and thin, but very clear:

"Get on—get on. I can hold them."

Down at the timber line a black form slipped into view—then another—and another—

The voice came up again, thin drawn through the sudden stillness like a voice on the telephone:

"Go on. This is your last chance."

He half turned to obey, then stopped and glanced over his shoulder unhappily. The old man lay with his head on his arm. His face was gray and drawn, eyes closed.

"Looks like he's dead," Cowey muttered uneasily, and then with conviction, "——, prob'ly he is dead!"

But he wasn't, for the eyes unclosed and he moved his hand feebly—the signal to go on.

The oiler drew a deep, shuddering breath, like a man suddenly plunged into a cold bath. Then, very slowly and stifly, he turned back and crouched behind his boulder again, the sweat dripping off his face, shaking all over with a cold chill.

Then he grunted a curse, slapped one hand on the top of the boulder, vaulted over, plunged down and brought up beside the other, feet first in a shower of small stones.

"All right so far."

His voice was shaky, but the tone held a curious exultation. He lay there a moment, breathing hard. The captain opened his eyes and said:

"Get on—I told you—"

Cowey said:

"Shut up. Who's doin' this?"

He was studying the lower edge of the boulder now, brows knit, fingers groping for a hand-hold.

He found it, straightened his legs and heaved, the muscles standing out hard and ropy under his sweat-soaked undershirt. The rock moved a little, tilted slowly—hung—toppled.

As it fell he caught up the little captain, threw him on to his shoulder and raced for the top.

There were crashings and splinterings—yells—something stung his arm and he slapped at it and turned to fire a blind shot. A rolling stone tripped him, and he staggered—recovered—went on—

THE LANDING party from the *Sir Frederick* found them there at sunset, a very weak old man and a big oiler stripped to the waist—he had used his shirt to signal with—still holding off a crowd of Papuans with an empty pistol.

Later, in the forecastle of the *Sir Frederick* some one asked about it. Cowey stopped, in the act of drawing on a borrowed shirt, to consider.

"No," he decided at length, "I don't like him. He's a good captain—knows his stuff an' all, but—I don't like him."

He thought a moment, his forehead creased, his arms through the sleeves of his shirt.

"Of course when he got knocked out that kinda left it up to me to take charge."

He pulled the shirt over his head.

"I was responsible, see?" he added.

A Major of Cavalry Takes a Hand

Beelzebub the Bane

By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

THE SAD-FACED driver brought the car to a stop while still some distance from the group of buildings. He shifted his quid of tobacco.

"'S's far as I kin take yeh." He indicated the boundary fence. "This here red-whiskered ol' colonel won't allow no ottermobiles in camp." He grunted disparagingly. "Says mules are good enough for him; that's rich, ain't it?" and he frowned, shaking his head at the idiosyncrasies of army colonels.

His one passenger climbed out wearily and brushed the white alkali dust from a blue suit that had all the dejected appearance of having been several days in a Pullman car. He looked a little disconsolately at the scene before him.

His eye roved over the bare mesa and out to where quivering heat waves distorted the outline of the distant hills, huge, angular masses of scarified rock, the slag and clinkers of some ancient volcanic blaze uprearing tortured pinnacles and twisted turrets to the pitiless sky.

A remorseless sun that must assuredly have melted the wax from the wings of Daedalus, hurled lances of searing heat at the cavalry cantonment before him, white-hot spears that pierced torn khaki canvas, dry pine boards and seething, stinking tar paper.

He could see men cowered in the half-open brown tents which stretched away in somnolent rows on the hard-baked soil. Farther out, drooping ranks of horses dozed despondently in the white alkali dust. Near at hand stood the slatternly cook-shacks like a procession of gaunt trollops, elbows akimbo. The only signs of life were visible outside the cook-shack doors where black, weaving swarms of flies, ceaselessly rising and falling, buzzed monotonously in constant motion, as if in some endless dance of death.

His eye rested curiously on these, then

he reached down with a sigh and picked up his suitcases.

"I wonder what humorist named this place Fort Bliss?" he inquired gravely of the driver, whose dour features broke into an appreciative grin.

"You said it!" averred the man at the wheel. "You said a heap. Fort Bliss, I never thought o' that before, Fort Bliss! What'd ya' know about that? That's a good one, that is, that's rich," and he disappeared, chuckling, in a cloud of dust.

"I seemed to have brought some sunshine into his drab life," the new arrival reflected gazing after the car, "but he's welcome to my share of all the sun in Texas," and he put down the heavy suitcases to mop the sweat off his face before resuming his progress toward the center of the cantonment.

One building stood out importantly from the row of nondescript huts. It was not only larger, but it boasted a tin megaphone which balanced precariously from a badly chewed post at its front.

The door hung askew on one hinge. He opened it by lifting it with both hands on the knob and carrying it inward. The room was curtained to keep out the heat, and in the semi-obscurity he made out several figures, all, strangely enough, squatted on the floor.

His eyes growing more accustomed to the dusk, he saw that they were soldiers, grouped in a tensely interested circle. There was a familiar flash and click and the clink of silver. Some one was chanting a refrain, steadily and intently.

"Eighter from Decatur, eighter from Decatur," the absorbed voice was repeating, "eighter from Decatur she is!" The voice rose exultantly and then the refrain changed. "Little bones so fine and true, you lak me and I lak you, and nobody ain't goin' to part us two—saying which I slides a long, slim, slimy, green dollar on the floor, and who fades me?"

Then the voice started its chant again, something this time about "little Jo" who figured in some manner with a nickel and a buffalo.

The newcomer watched for a space and then leaning forward tapped the nearest shoulder.

"Where can I find the commanding officer?"

An exceedingly annoyed face turned around, regarded him with hostility for a second, then became more kindly, said, "Right through that doorway, friend," and resumed the absorbed watching of the ivory cubes.

He grinned a little as he went toward the designated door.

"If this is headquarters, I'd hate to see hindquarters," he reflected.

THROUGH the haze of tobacco smoke he made out the forms of many people filling the small office. His eyes sought and found the broad desk set four square with the room. Behind it was an exceedingly fat officer, his round face rising moonlike from an unbuttoned coat collar. The double silver bars of a captain twinkled from his fleshy shoulders and a long black cigar hung from his mouth. Other young officers and some sergeants were seated on chairs, lounging against the desk and leaning against the wall.

Every one looked comfortably at ease, blouses were unbuttoned, cigars, pipes and cigarets were sending up clouds of smoke. The gathering of officers and sergeants was marked by a pleasant informality, unusual in military circles. The man, standing unnoticed in the doorway, took in the scene, deeply interested.

"You're wrong there." One of the sergeants had taken his pipe from his mouth and was pointing it at the round-faced captain behind the desk. "You're all wrong there. You say the outfit ain't hoodooed; I say it don't make no difference whether it's hoodooed or not. The men all thinks it is—which is just as bad."

The sergeant's tone was a little impatient.

The man in the doorway regarded him curiously.

There was a chorus of assent as the sergeant finished speaking. The stout young captain at the desk cleared his throat importantly.

"Yep, I guess you're right at that. If a man thinks he's hoodooed he might as well be hoodooed and you can bet your bottom dollar on that—" his eyes grew troubled—"but it's sure funny how things have been pilin' up on this regiment."

Other voices broke in like a Greek chorus.

"What about the colonel getting kicked?"

"How about the general makin' us fire our whole record course over again?"

"Remember Montgomery's horse running away and breaking up regimental inspection and the crawling we got—"

"And the general telling us we don't look after our animals properly—"

"And Sergeant Anderson getting kicked just before brigade athletics and losing us the field meet?"

"On top of it all, we get this order to drill against the other regiment in a brigade competition. 'Fat chance we got o' winnin' any brigade competition and you can bet your last dollar on that," the voice of the heavy captain summed up.

Every one grew silent and thoughtful.

The man in the doorway took a step forward, thinking the argument was finished. But the sergeant took his pipe out of his mouth and used it to lend emphasis to his words.

"Colonel Jimmy gets kicked, don't he, and laid up just before regimental inspection? How does he get kicked? By that crazy sorrel mare. Why do we have to fire our whole record rifle course over again? That crazy sorrel mare runs amuck down the firing line and breaks up all the score-keepin' for the rapid fire, and they never do get 'em straight again—"

Other voices broke in—

"And she runs away with Montgomery and busts up regimental inspection and the general gives us ——"

"It's that blamed mare, that nobody can groom, that the general finds on the picket line and then we get —— about the terrible condition of our animals."

"That loco, sorrel mare kicked Sergeant Anderson the day before the games."

The sergeant waved his pipe emphatically.

"Take it from me, if that —— of a mare ain't a hoodoo, I'll take a back seat and shut up—and I don't mean maybe!"

"It sure looks queer," agreed the round-faced captain, "queer as ——!" He shook his head doubtfully. "But that won't help us any on this brigade competition. Anything I can do for you, fellow?" His voice barked in sudden unfriendly question and the stranger in the doorway saw the eyes of the room turned upon himself.

The sergeant, pipe in mouth, gazed at him incuriously for a fleeting second, then quietly knocking the ashes out of his pipe, rose quickly and buttoned up his blouse collar.

"Why, yes—" the man in the doorway stepped forward—"I'm looking for the commanding officer," he announced mildly.

There was something in his voice and in the set of his shoulders under the civilian coat that vaguely worried the second sergeant. He glanced questioningly at his friend with the pipe, saw the latter quietly effacing himself toward the door, and quickly followed suit.

"That's me, fellow, that's me," the fat officer shook in heavy jocularity. "I'm the senior officer around here and the commandingest commanding officer that ever was, and you can bet your bottom dollar on that. Anything I can do you for?" His small eyes twinkled around at the rest of the group, as if for approbation.

The two sergeants had now foregathered at the back of the room in rear of the stranger. They waited, curiously, for the next word.

"I'm glad to know you, I'm sure," responded the mild-mannered man in the blue serge suit. "I'm Major Davies just reporting for duty—I seem to be assigned to this regiment."

There was a silence after these words, a silence broken only by the creaking of the door as it slowly opened and closed.

THE FAT, young captain puffed to his feet, his jocularity vanished, his face a blend of chagrin and amiability. The stranger, eyeing the broad bulk of the man remembered dimly some old saying about the heart of a cavalryman and the hips of a dairy-maid. Every one in the room had risen uncomfortably; collars were being buttoned.

"Well, well," beamed the heavy, young officer heartily, "well, well, Major, I'm right glad to welcome you to the good old 'Steenth." He pointed expansively to the other officers— "Meet some of the gang. This is Captain Montgomery, the regimental adjutant."

The major shook hands with a tall, lean-faced youngster who met his glance with a pair of gravely appraising eyes. The remainder of the officers left him with a confused impression of ill-at-ease, rather worried looking faces and awkward greetings. One by one they gradually withdrew, until only the fat young captain and the new arrival remained.

The captain looked a little red and warm; he wiped his forehead with a large bandanna that he drew from the capacious pocket of his Gargantuan breeches, his bearing rather uneasy.

"I was jest holdin' a little meeting of some of the officers, Major, on account that the regiment is in wrong with brigade headquarters and—"

The fat captain stopped uneasily, and then finding the newcomer's eyes boring gravely into his, he was forced to continue.

"Only this morning we got an order confining the whole regiment to camp—that's just a sample of the way they pick on us." The stout captain's face grew indignant.

"Yes?" queried the stranger politely. "What was the trouble?"

"No trouble at all." His words came with a rush. "Some busybody from the general's staff came snooping around the kitchens and turned in a rotten report."

There flashed through the stranger's memory a vision of weaving, black swarms of flies, ceaselessly rising and falling, outside the cook-shack doors, as if in some endless dance of death.

"I thought Colonel Jameson was in command here?" queried the newcomer.

"He's away for a few days." The bulky youth waved a sweeping hand, spoke smoothly enough, but his eyes flickered as he spoke. "He's out inspecting the border patrols, down towards Ysleta, and won't be back for two or three days, I think."

The new major regarded him, gravely wondering just why he should go to such elaborate pains to lie about the colonel's absence.

The fat captain was distinctly uncomfortable. If only the new arrival would say something, instead of looking through him so calmly.

He went on rather desperately, wiping his forehead with the big bandanna, feeling that he had to make conversation.

"Things ain't so good around here," he confided. "Everything's been goin' wrong lately—the regiment thinks it's been hoodooed." He laughed deprecatingly, but not very convincingly, his eyes watchful.

"You know, Major, we drew a wild sorrel mare from the Remount, and ever since she's been with the regiment ——'s been bustin' loose. The soldiers call her Beelzebub." He chuckled again, his eyes still uneasy. "Everybody hates her because she kicked Colonel Jimmy—we call him that, you know—Colonel Jameson—the boys are all crazy about him—" he volunteered, and stopped, his small eyes searching the major's face.

"The boys?" The major looked slightly puzzled. "You mean the men or the officers?"

"I mean both. This outfit's like one big family, that's what Colonel Jim—Colonel Jameson always says, just like one big family," and the major noticed a faint flare of belligerency in his small, close-set eyes.

"Very nice, I'm sure," commented the

new arrival, politely. "Are there any other field officers with the regiment?"

"No, sir, you are the first in a long time. We've only had one major before," the stout youth volunteered, "and he didn't last long, somehow. I don't think he got along with the regiment very well and the colonel had him transferred."

The stout officer looked very placid, his eyes fixed somewhere at a point above the major's head.

"Yes?" The newcomer's voice was expressionless. "You must have a highly individualistic organization here."

The round face of the captain looked faintly puzzled.

"Y-es," he agreed, uncertainly, then with an air of friendly confidence, "You know the colonel is awfully particular about the old 'Steenth Cavalry. He was born and raised in it. He won't let anybody monkey with it. He told me before he left the other day not to make any changes and he swore he'd eternally hamstring any one that tried to meddle with the regiment—he's funny that way—I'm just passin' this on to you so's you won't get in Dutch." The captain fairly oozed good will.

"Very kind of you, I'm sure. How about this brigade competition I heard you talking about? When does it come off?"

The face of the young man fell despondently.

"We jest got a couple o' weeks to get ready for it. Not a chance in the world gettin' ready in that time, and you can bet your last bottom dollar on that!"

A FEW MINUTES later the newly joined major was straightening out his one-room shack, unpacking boots and uniforms, when Montgomery, the lean-faced regimental adjutant, dropped in to pay his respects.

After some polite nothings he cleared his throat rather nervously.

"Major—" his eyes were quite serious—"this brigade competition is kind of a special benefit performance for the 'Steenth."

"Yes?" He raised his eyebrows. "I gathered as much from the portly captain's words."

"Oh, him!" And Montgomery looked disgusted. "But the fact is that Colonel Jameson is in wrong with brigade headquarters. I've heard on pretty good authority that if the regiment falls down on this competition they'll take the 'Steenth away from him."

"What's the big idea?"

"New brigadier-general anxious to make a reputation." Montgomery shrugged his shoulders.

"What have they against the colonel, particularly?"

Montgomery looked moodily at his boot tips—

"Well, he's getting old and—" he dragged the words out unwillingly—"I'm afraid he's losing his grip a little. You see he's only got another two months before he retires for age. And it would break his heart to lose his regiment before he retires."

The major said nothing for a space, busied himself taking out the boot-trees and flexing the supple leather of the new boots. Raising his head finally, he remarked—

"Seems kind of a pity they can't let him alone for that short time."

Montgomery looked up suddenly, studying the face of the new major, then his eyes lighted up.

"It does sort of seem so, doesn't it?" he offered and thereafter departed.

The major resumed his unpacking, whistling thoughtfully to himself as he worked.

DOWN ON "B" Troop picket lines, that afternoon, old First Sergeant Henderson marched slowly around his men and horses, listening to the dull knock of currycombs against brushes as the troop sweated through stables.

"Miller!" He turned to the stable sergeant. "That young fellow will have to be some pumpkins to pull this outfit outa the mud before brigade competition." The battle-scarred old top sergeant was no optimist at the best and he looked especially pessimistic under the flare of the afternoon sun.

"Ye-ah, but this baby's sure cast his milk teeth. He don't say much. You ought to seen his face when that fat young misfit was tryin' to throw the bull into him," and Miller chuckled. Then, after peering off to the end of the row of men and horses, he said, "but here he comes now; he ain't losin' much time gettin' on the job. Betcha a dollar to a hole in the doughnut he roars about no officers bein' at stables—"

Sergeant Miller carefully knocked the ashes out of his pipe, put it in his pocket and straightened up to attention.

The grizzled first sergeant received a quick impression of trim neatness, of a blouse that flared to the right degree, of breeches that fitted snugly below the knee, of good leather well polished, and the little flicker of color from a row of ribbons.

"I'm Major Davies," announced the newcomer, returning the salutes, then quietly putting out his hand to Sergeant Henderson who shook hands with much dignity. "Any officers on duty with your troop, Sergeant?"

"Yes, sir, Captain Stone and Lieutenant Smithers."

"Do officers in this regiment attend stables?"

The old sergeant stared straight to the front.

"Well, sir, sometimes they do and sometimes they don't," he answered judiciously.

"I see," and he turned to the stable sergeant. "Seems to me I've seen you somewhere before—oh, yes, at headquarters. You smoke a pipe, don't you?"

Sergeant Miller looked a little uncomfortable.

Then back to the grizzled first sergeant.

"Glad to have met you, Sergeant; it's good to see an old-timer again." And with a nod and a smile he was gone.

He was barely out of earshot before Sergeant Henderson raised a raucous voice that boomed to the length of the picket line and brought the heads of both men and horses up with a jerk.

"Snap into it, you triple-dashed Siwashes, you been gettin' away with murder around here long enough. Get some elbow grease into that groomin'!" There was something almost joyous in the ring of his voice.

UP IN THE one-room adobe building, the only cool spot in camp, that acted as mess and club for the officers, the fat young captain was holding forth to a listening group.

"And believe me, I think I gave him the right steer. No sense lettin' a fellow like that come in here with his trick uniform and a chestful of ribbons and run hog wild. Might as well let him see where he gets off at the start. First thing you know he'll be rampagin' around here like he owned the regiment. If he starts any funny business like that I'll spill a flea in Colonel Jimmy's ear and you can bet your bottom dollar on that!"

Montgomery's lean face appeared in the doorway.

"The major directs all officers to report to their troops immediately and remain with the men until recall from stables," he announced and, swinging on his heel, he departed, leaving behind him a crowd of surprized and sullen young officers who nevertheless prepared to obey.

The sentiments of most of them were well echoed by the young captain with the chubby figure.

"He's got one —— of a nerve, blowing in here all dressed up like a Christmas tree with decorations from France, and riding —— out of a bunch that have sweated down here on the border through the whole of the war. Wait till Colonel Jimmy hears of this," he threatened.

THE TALL spare figure of Montgomery rejoined the major and they watched the grooming of the headquarters troop animals.

"It does my heart good to see these birds made to snap into it," grinned the adjutant; then his face grew serious. "They're not a bad bunch at heart, they've just run wild and put it all over Colonel Jameson. The colonel forgets that most of them are kids and he treats them like they're grown up, trained, professional officers."

Montgomery suddenly stiffened. He was looking off towards the road where a cloud of dust was growing rapidly nearer.

"Here comes trouble. Colonel Jameson has been on a little party. Don't mind anything he says to you," Montgomery spoke swiftly, and then snapped up to salute as a buckboard drove up and stopped with a flourish in a slowly settling cloud of white dust.

Out of the murk appeared the head and shoulders of a towering figure, a form proportioned like some ancient Viking, a huge red-bearded, rosy-cheeked, old man, his hairy chest showing through a half buttoned, olive drab shirt. Beside him sat the fat young captain, a look of unctuous satisfaction on his face.

Major Davies felt a stare from hard and hostile eyes, as the old man peered at him from under bushy, red eyebrows.

"What the —— do you mean, Major?" the old man suddenly roared at him. "What the —— do you mean by giving orders around my regiment?"

The major saluted and stood stiffly at attention.

"I seemed to be the only field officer present, Colonel, and I naturally thought the officers were neglecting their plain duty to be with their men, sweating out here in the sun."

The old man glared at him suspiciously, pulling at his red beard.

"You sure you haven't been sent down here by brigade headquarters to make trouble?" he asked, and there was a hunted look in the old fellow's eyes that was rather pathetic.

"No, Colonel, I haven't even reported my arrival to brigade headquarters yet—and I haven't any desire to be a troublemaker."

The old man grumbled in his beard for a little; then, frowning deeply, he rumbled out—

"You're right, Major, these young fellows ought to be at stables with their men, glad you checked up on them."

He signalled to the driver to move on. The buckboard disappeared in a cloud of dust. The cloud halted in a short space and then returned, the old man leaning from the seat.

"Major," he growled, "you'll have to accept the apologies of an old man who's been so bedeviled that he's afraid of every new face he sees around camp." And he drove away again, leaving a faint odor of whisky in the air.

The major returned thoughtfully to his watch of the headquarters troop. Montgomery said nothing for the space of five minutes, then—

"He's really an old prince, Major, but —— that fat chunk of mud with him!"

"Where does the fat boy get his drag?"

"Fat boy has a sister, good cook, comfortable little house near the post. Colonel lives with them and gets all his dope at the dinner table—bad combination," Montgomery grunted.

"I see." There was a silence for a time; then the major said thoughtfully, "but we've got to win the brigade competition and we haven't much time to get ready for it."

"Yes, and the regiment is firmly convinced that they can't win anything because they think they're hoodooed by a wild-eyed sorrel mare," Montgomery grumbled.

"Where is this destroying angel? Let's have a look at her." They quickened their pace until they reached the "B" troop picket line again.

The stable sergeant saluted.

"Yes, sir, she's down here at the end of the line—she's sure a bad one—kicked the colonel, busted up regimental formations, got us in wrong with the general. She's a sure enough hoodoo if there ever was one. The men calls her Beelzebub, sir."

He pointed out a golden sorrel mare who snorted at them as she leaped to the end of her halter rope. The major swept his glance over her silken muzzle, her flat, slim legs and dainty hoofs, her depth of chest and the perfect curve of croup and flank, and turned an appreciative eye to find Sergeant Henderson watching him.

"She's all horse."

His eyes gleamed with the beauty of her and Sergeant Henderson nodded slow approval, but the stable sergeant looked doubtful.

"Ye-es, sir," he agreed dubiously, scratching his head, then added, "What ain't nine-tenths ——. Nobody will ride her any more. She's put about six people in the hospital, already. Yes, sir, she's a first class, A Number One hoodoo, if there ever was one!"

Sergeant Henderson looked at him, frowning, and grunted. The major caught the look.

"She's either a first class hoodoo or she has an A Number One bluff on everybody— What do you think, Sergeant Henderson? Hasn't any one in the regiment ridden her?"

The old sergeant looked a little uncomfortable.

"Why, sir, Captain Montgomery here tried but she got him."

"She put me on dismounted duty for three weeks," Montgomery admitted, a little shamefaced.

"And no other officer has even tried to ride her?" the major questioned remorselessly.

Sergeant Henderson gazed straight ahead, his eyes quite expressionless. Montgomery shook his head.

"Hum," commented the major, and studied the mare again. "I wonder if a little harsh treatment and some good, hard work wouldn't make a first class cavalry charger of her?" he queried half to himself, then looking straight into Sergeant Henderson's eyes, he remarked, "Lots of things would be better for a little harsh treatment and some hard work, eh, Sergeant?"

Sergeant Henderson gazed at him soberly, then with a nod—

"Yes, sir," he answered slowly. "Most anything needs some harsh treatment and some hard work once in a while."

The two officers had disappeared behind the next picket line.

"That new major must think he's —— on wheels if he thinks he can make anything outa that she ——," said the stable sergeant, while he shook his head and refilled his pipe.

Sergeant Henderson looked thoughtful a moment, then—

"—— on wheels is goin' to bust loose around this place or I miss my guess—and I hope he can put it over," he growled to himself, paying no attention to the stable sergeant's puzzled look.

Montgomery strode along silently beside the major until they came to the end of the squadron.

"Are you going to tackle that mare, Major?" he inquired hopefully, at last.

"It sort of looks like I'm elected, doesn't it?" and he looked sidewise at Montgomery. "The mare doesn't look so difficult, because on that job I won't have to fight off interference."

Montgomery looked up quickly and saw the major's eyes.

"I get you," he nodded, then grew thoughtful. "It might be easier to ride off interference than you think, Major," he announced after a moment. "It's only a short while until the brigade competition comes off—yes, sir, I may be able to keep interference away for that time—if my constitution will stand the strain."

Again there was silence for a space then the major cleared his throat.

"If it—ah—should be necessary to, ah—use up any stimulants I think I could lay hands on several bottles of old Bourbon."

Montgomery chuckled and said nothing.

"And you can bet your last dollar on that," continued the major gravely.

THAT EVENING the old colonel came in to dinner at the officers' mess.

"Major," he growled, staring belligerently from under bushy eyebrows, "Captain

Montgomery tells me that our outpost at Fort Hancock is in bad shape and needs inspection. I'll be gone a few days. I'm taking Montgomery with me. Keep things going until I get back and don't let that —— brigade headquarters bunch walk off with the whole regiment while I'm gone, understand?"

The old man glared at him while he pulled at the two ends of his great, red beard; then, leaning closer, in a voice meant to be a whisper although it rumbled all over the room:

"I think those hounds at brigade headquarters are trying to make trouble for me and the good old 'Steenth; don't let 'em put anything over on you, Major. I trust you, young fellow," and in the old fellow's eyes was a hunted, worried look that went through the younger man like a knife.

"You can count on me to do my best, Colonel," he said soberly.

The old man, after studying him for a moment, looked relieved and, raising his head, roared out to the others—

"I want you young fellows to remember that first, last and all the time you belong to the old 'Steenth, the finest regiment in the army, and I want you to work just as hard for Major Davies here while I'm gone as you would for me," whereat they all cheered lustily and Montgomery suddenly buried his face in a paper napkin and the major forbore to look at him.

THAT NIGHT the harsh outlines of the camp were softened in the molten silver of the Texas moon. Sergeant Henderson, as was his custom, walked down to have a look at his horses before turning in. He stepped out of the shadow of the feed shack, then paused, and as quickly stepped back again unseen. He stared curiously at an erect figure walking down the picket line, a light Saumur saddle on its shoulder, a bridle and quirt in its hand.

Watching carefully he nodded to himself as the figure approached the sorrel mare, snorting there in the moonlight. Sergeant Henderson looked anxious as the mare reared and plunged, then nodded approval as the man steadily approached her and grasped her halter.

The mare quieted down. He heard a soothing voice and then saw the man stroking her gently. She snorted at intervals, but stood quietly while the man's hand stole up to her head and stroked her ears and continued on down, patting her neck and withers.

"It's a gift," Sergeant Henderson said to himself. "It's a gift, also it's guts, and a horse knows it."

The sergeant leaned forward as the man reached quietly for the saddle, and the old man smiled as the saddle was skilfully slid up on to the mare's back, after letting her smell of it. It took ten minutes before the cinch buckles were fastened, and the sergeant found himself sighing with relief when the mare was at last saddled.

Again he nodded approval as he observed the workmanlike way the man carried his bridle, its reins looped over his shoulder, the crown of the headstall in his right hand.

Then the old sergeant gasped. The mare had risen swiftly and lashed out her forefeet. He breathed a sigh of relief as the figure dodged nimbly and returned again, to soothe and stroke the excited animal. Minutes passed before the bit and bridoon were in place, the headstall was on, and the throat latch buckled.

"This is where the excitement begins."

The old sergeant found himself breathing hard as he saw the man unsnap the halter strap and back the mare away from the picket line. Then Sergeant Henderson straightened out; an admiring gasp escaped his lips. For the man had swiftly grasped the mare's nose in his left hand, had pulled her head around toward him with a powerful grip, and then, as she stood there, bent in a half-circle, he had leaped nimbly into the saddle.

The startled mare found her head released. In the second that she spent in shaking her irritated nose the rider had settled firmly into the saddle, knees and thighs and calves gripped firmly ready for her next move.

It was not long in coming. She stood trembling and immovable for a space.

"If she starts buck jumping in that light saddle," the sergeant breathed to himself, "he's a goner."

But she reared swiftly, instead, so that she stood high on her hind legs, trying to throw her rider over backward. The sergeant found himself suddenly breathing a sigh of relief, for the man had leaned forward from his perilous seat, had grasped the mare's nose again in a powerful grip and had twisted her head around so that she must perforce come to the ground again to retain her balance.

"Now look out!" The sergeant found himself getting excited. But before the mare had time to start any plunging the rider had brought his quirt down with one cracking blow across her flanks. With one idea and one only, to get away from that smarting pain, she leaped forward, and when she alighted she was running with the speed of the wind.

"The boy knows his stuff!" whispered the old man to himself, as horse and rider grew smaller in the distance. "He's puttin' out through the heavy sand." The sergeant sat himself down on a convenient bale of timothy hay and waited.

It must have been half an hour before his patience was rewarded, and he saw horse and rider return slowly, the mare breathing hard. Then he saw the rider dismount and mount, carelessly and easily, saw him stroke her sides and flanks, saw him lift up her feet while the mare took it all patiently and with an attitude of complete resignation. The sergeant waited until the lone figure had unsaddled and unbridled the mare and had walked away toward the officers' row, before he approached the still panting animal. She greeted him by coming suddenly to life and lashing out with both heels with all of her accustomed deviltry.

"Oho," said Sergeant Henderson, "you've still got a kick left have you? But wait till that young fellow gets through with you and you'll be waitin' on table and likin' it," and he departed, grinning cheerfully and confidently to himself.

UP IN THE officers' mess, the fat young captain, who had preempted the choicest chair by virtue of his seniority, was again holding forth.

"What's his idea anyway?" he was asking in an aggrieved tone. "Askin' everybody whether they tried to ride that wild-eyed mare. I says to him how the doctor had told me to stay on dismounted duty on account o' that operation I had last year and he says to me, 'you're to be congratulated that your misfortunes have not succeeded in crushing you yet,' raisin' his eyebrows as he talks—an' he asked you too, and you?" He received confirming nods from every one present. "Why, if he's so curious about our ridin' that mare, why don't he ride her himself? He's afraid to—and you can bet your last bottom dollar on that!"

"Some day, Captain, somebody's going to make you raise that dollar you're always anteing so recklessly."

The stout young captain heaved his bulk out of the chair, red-faced and embarrassed, with the major smiling at him from the doorway.

But there was no time for apologies.

For there was a loud blare of a trumpet from near headquarters, a continuing high, keen, shrill, alarming note, repeated over and over again, that brought every one up, all standing, wild surmise written on every face. From all over the camp other trumpets took up the clamor and there was a sudden sound of running and shouting.

"Fire call?" queried the fat young captain nervously.

"Fire call, ——!" snorted a lieutenant, breaking for the door, a lieutenant who as sergeant had spent many weary months in Jolo. "That's call to arms!"

Men were tumbling out of tents, buckling on belts and pistols, dragging their rifles after them. The air was full of a confused babble of shouts and commands. The young officers were running around busily interfering with the sergeants, and the sergeants, as is the habit of irritated sergeants, were taking it out on the privates. At last, after what seemed an interminable time, the wavering lines of men were standing in rank in the troop streets.

The major stood quietly by headquarters, a stop watch in his hand, an extremely bored look on his face.

After calling for reports he made a hasty inspection, then ordered the men dismissed, and sent for all officers.

"Very creditable performance," he greeted, his voice quite pleasant. "It took thirty-five minutes for the regiment to get ready to repel an attack. It took only ten minutes for Villa to ride through and shoot up that American army camp at Columbus, New Mexico. It is unnecessary to state that this leaves rather long odds in favor of Villa. The crowning touch to your smooth, orderly and silent mobilization I have yet to compliment you upon. It seems that only one troop in the regiment thought of breaking out ammunition and issuing it—I suppose the rest of you mean to throw rocks at the enemy? The next time you hear the trumpets play that little tune you heard a while back, kindly forget the cave-man stuff and remember that rocks as weapons have been out for some time. That's all, gentlemen. Good night."

He turned away.

There was something in the way he pronounced, "Good night," that made them quite uncomfortable.

It was rather a subdued group of officers who assembled for breakfast next morning. Even the fat captain, who blew in for a morning cigar, had nothing to say.

But they were to have no peace. Officers' call blew after breakfast.

"Gentlemen," greeted the major, and they noticed with sinking hearts that he had a stop watch in his hand, "we are assuming that a large band of Mexican bandits have attacked El Paso, and are withdrawing. We are ordered to pursue them into Mexico and capture or kill them. The regiment will march as quickly as possible, fully equipped, to keep the field for five days. You will report when your organizations are ready for inspection. My stop watch starts now."

But, as some one remarked later, what was needed was not a stop watch, but an alarm clock. It took that regiment of cavalry nearly six hours before the last troop moved up on line, saddles packed, men equipped and trains loaded.

Then the major made a quick but very thorough inspection of the massed squadrons, after ordering tents pitched. The inspection showed that the regiment could not have kept the field for a single day as a whole. It was short of everything from rations to ammunition, from spare horseshoes to range finders.

And the major went to great pains to point out, to a very sheepish group of officers, just what sort of a half-ready mob the regiment was. He intimated that a self-respecting Boy Scouts troop would laugh them to scorn.

"And," he concluded, "it isn't as though there weren't any good sergeants in the regiment; the outfit is full of old-timers who'd show you how to hold down your jobs, if you'd let them—"

A wide-eyed clerk at headquarters, who had kept one ear glued assiduously to the office door, told Sergeant Henderson of the meeting.

"Yeh?" The old man showed no surprize. "He's puttin' them through the heavy sand now a while," he said to himself, and went on to his orderly room where his rather anxious-eyed young captain was awaiting him with a lot of questions.

The following day saw them subjected to a pitiless repetition of the same program with the added hardship of a regimental drill thrown in for good measure.

The regimental drill was a heart breaking spectacle. At the walk the lines wavered like reeds in the wind. At the trot, loose hung troops and squadrons milled around despondently; at the gallop there were ragged frayed ends and tags of troops all over the drill ground and the air was filled with enough shouting and excited clamor to have maneuvered a division at war strength.

The officers looked so woebegone that the major hadn't the heart to say much to them. After comparing them unfavorably to Coxie's army at its worst, he dismissed them.

ON THE following evening a group of spent and weary officers gathered in the club. The fat young captain lay sprawled out in a deep wicker chair.

"Why don't that bird start drilling us by moonlight; seems a shame to waste these fine evenings," he piped up wearily, "I wish to —— that Colonel Jimmy would come back. He'd put a stop to this foolishness and you can bet—and that's the truth," he corrected hastily.

"Well," another voice admitted, "he didn't crawl our frames today, anyway. Told me today that my troop began faintly to remind him of something like a troop of cavalry. I don't think he's going to be so bad when we get going."

"And he tells me that he detects symptoms of real, honest-to-God soldierin' in my troop. 'Foster them,' he says and cocks a wise eye and grins at me. I think he's goin' to be a pretty good scout if he sees we mean business," spoke up another, and there was no dispute from any one present.

Meanwhile the major was sailing down the wings of the wind on the light, floating gallop of the sorrel mare, somewhere out on the moonlit mesa. He took her out every night, now, a thoroughly willing and anxious-to-be-good creature of infinite speed and dainty smoothness of gait. He worked her carefully, balancing her up so that she obeyed the slightest pressure of rein and heel. He had her turning on the forehand and the haunches, had her working "on two tracks" and trying her best to learn what the good cavalry charger should know. She was a beautifully sensitive creature; one could play on her, as a good violinist plays on a Stradivarius, and get the same quick, certain response.

By day she stood on the picket line, and would cheerfully lay back her ears and kick at any one else who approached. Sergeant Henderson was the only one who knew of her surrender and he kept his knowledge under his hat.

The regiment did not progress so fast. They were handicapped by the fixed conviction that they were hoodooed and that, however hard they worked, something would occur to make them lose the fruits of victory. Their work became mechanically better, they were beginning to acquire a certain rigid correctness, but as a regiment they lacked that crackling ripple and vibrancy, that intangible whip and snap, which only comes from the hearts of the men. It can not be hammered into an organization; it has to come from within.

THE DAY of the brigade competition came. Orderlies from brigade headquarters were out early, setting up the blue flags that marked the reviewing limits. A procession of cars rolled out to the drills grounds and desposited the general and his staff. The two regiments were reviewed and inspected. The 'Steenth was directed to dismount and wait while the other cavalry regiment went through its drill.

The waiting 'Steenth watched it anxiously. The other outfit was not spectacular. It went through a variety of evolutions, in stolid correctness. It knew its work and did it with a certain machine-like precision that discouraged the 'Steenth, waiting in long lines of horses and dismounted men.

Major Davies studied the 'Steenth anxiously. They were dead on their feet, heavy, resigned, and his face grew worried.

The other regiment had completed its drill. An orderly mounted, up near the reviewing line, and started for the 'Steenth.

At that moment a man on the flank of the waiting regiment pointed out something, shielding his eyes in perplexity. Word passed swiftly down the lines, and men were craning their necks to see the strange sight.

The golden sorrel mare, her glossy skin gleaming like molten metal, was being led up, saddled and bridled, to the major.

The whole regiment watched, breathless, while he dismounted from the horse he had been riding. They grew round-eyed with wonder as he calmly approached the sorrel mare. Then a gasp went up as they saw the mare dance up to him nervously, whickering and nuzzling his arm. They scarcely believed their eyes when he leaped lightly into the saddle, while the mare stood docile.

There was no time for discussion. The major had signaled and they were standing to horse. Another signal and the thousand men swung into the saddles as one man, the scarlet guidons whipped free and the golden regimental standard flung into the breeze. The solid, massed ranks of the regiment stretched out before him, men sitting at attention and waiting, no movement disturbing the scene except the occasional tossing head of some fretful horse.

Suddenly officers' call blew. From their posts, in front of troops and squadrons and platoons, the officers came galloping, to converge on the silent figure sitting on the golden sorrel mare out in front. They drew up and saluted, their eyes amazedly watching the strangely quiet mare.

"Gentlemen," the major's voice rasped at them, "I am credibly informed that if the 'Steenth loses this competition Colonel Jameson will be immediately relieved from command. If you love the colonel as much as you say you do, you don't want to see him lose his regiment when he is so close to the end of his active service. Tell your men that they will lose the colonel if they fall down. Tell them that the hoodoo mare is no longer a hoodoo but a mascot. Tell them that we are going to win this competition in spite of —— and high water. Are you with me?"

A growl went up from the assembled officers.

"You're —— right, we're with you, Major," and they turned like one man and galloped back to their posts.

He watched them, saw each officer draw up before his men, saw the officers vehemently talking.

Sitting in front of that great mass, the major felt, rather than saw, a tremor go through the regiment. It seemed fairly to quiver, to tighten up as a fighter's muscles tighten before the final gong; it seemed to gather in on itself more compactly. From a sprawling mass of men and horses it became suddenly welded into one complete unit, a unit that suddenly was crouching and ready for action, every nerve and sinew taut.

Looking upon that quivering eagerness his heart rose within him. With a keen swish and a flicker of steel he drew his saber and a thousand sabers leaped from the scabbards, a sudden tossing wave of burnished silver. He signalled, and the trumpets blared forth a crash of music that sounded like an intolerant burst of proud laughter.

In swift obedience, the great mass of men and horses rolled forward like a wall, a sweeping wave of molten bronze, with the sun rippling and sparkling on bit and sword and spur. He signalled again, and the huge body quickened into a trot, the great line began to waver, and suddenly it divided into three squadrons, square masses of smoothly moving horsemen, each articulating easily into the regiment as a whole. Another signal, a quick beat downward of clenched hand, this signal, and men leaped swiftly to earth with their rifles, forming into long lines of footmen, who advanced, crouching and running in alternate sections, while the horses were galloped to the rear, in swaying columns.

Exultantly he waved them again, and the horses returned, the men mounted. With instant response they broke into the gallop. Then the major played on that great mass of flowing, smoothly coordinated elements as a master plays on an organ. He flicked his wrist and the long lines dissolved and reformed with bewildering rapidity; he raised his hand

and they wheeled like swallows and went coursing up the field; he and the sorrel mare were everywhere while the long, heaving, shimmering lines of steel gleamed through vast clouds of dust.

The earth shook to the tread of thousands of iron-shod hoofs; there were sudden flashes of scarlet and gold through murky clouds as the great battle standards galloped into line; there was the heave and surge and thunder of vast movement. High above the shifting, hurrying mass, the trumpets, at his beck, rang out their bronze notes, calling stridently for order, commanding, exhorting, directing the sweep and flow of this vast mass, so that it moved like one great weapon, so that it was as responsive to his control as a rapier in the hands of a skilled duelist, so that it conformed to his will with all the flexibility and quick response of a Toledo blade.

And the earth-spurning little sorrel mare was everywhere at once. She floated like a cloud down the front of the regiment, brushed lightly through its galloping flanks, shot through narrow gaps between rapidly closing squadrons; tirelessly and swiftly, her gallop never faltered.

A FAINT dust-cloud on the horizon grew larger. It came rapidly up the road and debouched into the drill ground. As the wind carried away the white dust, one might have seen a buckboard drawn by straining mules. It drew up with a clatter behind the reviewing line where stood the general and his officers.

A sudden clamor of trumpets and the recall sounded.

Major Davies led the regiment, in line of masses, straight at the reviewing officer and brought them from a gallop to a sudden halt. The 'Steenth stood, men and horses, panting and wet with sweat. The major dismounted before the general and saluted.

"Will you please call your officers?" directed the white-mustached brigade commander. When they were all assembled he stepped forward a pace.

"Gentlemen—" he paused as if seeking words—"I want to tell you, that not only have you won the brigade competition, but that in doing it you have put up the most wonderful exhibition of cavalry drill it has been my fortune to see in thirty years of service."

There was a commotion at one side. Every one turned and saw a great red-bearded man peering proudly at the regiment, through bushy eyebrows. Then a steady, blue eye was turned on the general.

"Thank you, General." He tugged at the ends of his red beard, and cleared his throat importantly, then his voice boomed out, "Thank you, General. I appreciate your kind words. I have put in some hard work trying to make the old 'Steenth Cavalry the finest regiment in the army."

Looking beyond the old red-bearded colonel, Major Davies suddenly spied the lean face of Montgomery, his eyes bloodshot, his face pale, looking as if he had spent ten nights in a bar-room. Montgomery winked a solemn wink.

The officers pressed around the colonel; the general congratulated him; there were many felicitations. Major Davies stepped back, unnoticed, with the golden sorrel mare.

"Well, old girl—" and he rubbed her nose—"you did all the work, old lady, and the colonel gets all the credit. But you're young; it won't hurt you any. As a matter of fact you'll soon get used to it—that's just the old army game."

Shooting Wild

BY

WILLIAM ASHLEY ANDERSON

THE BLUE dusk of night was settling over the high rolling hills that heave their trackless bulk between Mount Meru and Oldeani. With a single gun-bearer I had ranged all day long through the thick grass of the plains for eland that failed to appear. I had even gone aside to crawl on hands and knees through pig tunnels in thorn-matted *dongas* and had not thought of leopards until reminded, after I had gained the upper level of the plains, that these are their favorite haunts. We were still miles from camp, and it is never good to be on a lion-infested veldt in the darkness when these brutes are hunting.

Finally I gave up hope of an evening shot and headed for the nearest marked trail, sometimes breaking into a trot. I was tired, panting a bit, when Ali hissed, "*Simba!*" and I froze.

The rolling plain here was marked by sparsely scattered mimosa bush, fringing a deep, dark *donga* choked with a thorn jungle. The grass was more than waist high, and in the failing light it was impossible to see clearly. Besides, the stillness of this hour in Africa has a psychological effect that is curious. It is the most delightful hour of all—in camp. On the other hand, it is a rather frightening hour on the open veldt or in thick bush. Anyway, there we were frozen, Ali with eyes fixed on a movement of the grass directly in front of us, no more than eighty yards away, myself with eyes rolling right and left toward the nearest mimosas. It was my first meeting with lion, and the setting was decidedly inauspicious.

All I really knew about lions was that they are the most uncertain and dangerous animals alive. I had not the faintest idea what to do. Opening the cut-off of my rifle, I began tiptoeing toward a mimosa, a gentle wind fortunately favoring me. As I leaned against the thin bole of the tree, Ali was at my shoulder.

"*Huko,*" he breathed, indicating the direction with a tilt of his chin.

I heard the rumbling grunt of the beast and saw the outline of a black mane lifted just above the top of the grass. All at once I saw another! And another! I had barged into a pack, in deep grass, at the hour when lions begin their hunt.

An experienced man might have gingerly retired and sought a large tree for the night. Being a novice and in fear of the contempt of my gun-bearer, I took a chance. I even had to guess at the target, since nothing could be seen but the moving silhouette of the mane barely showing above the grass. Bracing the rifle against the tree, I aimed through the grass, and fired. Following the crash came a pandemonium of squeals and a rush of the whole pack for the *donga.*

"Ah!" exclaimed Ali with inexpressible relief. "Pigs!"

It is as easy as that to be fooled on the plains! In close country it is easier.

I WAS trekking one day across a plain that was broken up by clumps of woods and brush. A bush fire had swept across it, and was still smoking and smoldering in patches. The country was black and gray with a pall of ashes, and we kept our eyes to the path to keep from stepping into hot embers. Once as I lifted my eyes, I caught sight of a lion slinking into a clump of trees and bush. Ali had ammunition boots on, so we went after him.

The light was uncertain and the shadows of the trees and forms were distorted by the unnatural blending of gray and black and brown.

I moved cautiously, head up, rifle ready, looking well forward for the first sign of the beast. All at once Ali exclaimed sharply:

"*Simama!* Stop, *bwana!* Stop!" I felt the involuntary riffle on my scalp that a man feels when the danger can't be seen. "There he is," whispered Ali.

"Where?"

"There! Right there in front of you!"

I steadied myself, with rifle half up, ready for a snapshot, and very carefully scrutinizing the shadows. But I could not see a sign.

"Where, you idiot?" I asked nervously.

"Oh, my God!" said Ali. "Have I your permission to run?"

"No-o-o—"

"He's right at your feet!"

I lowered my gaze. And there he was! I had been looking beyond him. His tail was lashing jerkily, his jaws wide open and nose crinkled in silent snarls. Involuntarily I gave a yell and jumped straight up in the air. The lion, startled, gave a spasmodic whirl backward. Ali and I ran, and the lion ran.

Any one watching the lion and us as we entered that copse, and as we all emerged a moment later without a shot being fired, might well have wondered what terrible thing had scared us.

On the open flat veldt, too, it is equally possible to have such a mischance.

During a long grueling *safari* across the plains east of Muanza, we came to a halt upon the open veldt, bare as a schoolyard. The ground rolled so slightly that forms were visible at a great distance. We had been marching by moonlight, and day had just dawned. Off on the eastern horizon I spied a wildebeeste, silhouetted against the sun, the long thin legs, the mane, the tufted tail, the horse-like body outlined sharply against the lemon-colored sky of early morning.

We had been marching on short rations and we needed food badly, so off I started with a Nandi scout at my heels. We had covered about half a mile when two lions jumped to their feet in front of us and ran away like frightened dogs, flicking up little puffs of dust, so we slowed down, laughing, and decided not to take things too much for granted. In the meantime the wildebeeste circled away from the sun to the westward. It looked as if he would require either careful stalking or a long shot. Such shots are ordinarily inexcusable, but I had a hundred and twenty men about a mile and a half away watching me hungrily.

Presently the wildebeeste lay down, sidewise. If startled, I knew he would race away and be lost to us. So I decided to chance a shot. Lying down, I ranged at six hundred and fifty yards and fired.

"Oh, very far!" said the Nandi who was standing above me, observing. "The bullet went very far over him."

This was surprizing because I had aimed from rest full on the target. It occurred to me that my sights had been jarred. I stood up to make my own observation, sighting at two hundred and fifty yards. The bullet flicked up dust at the base of the target! The wildebeeste turned a back somersault and charged, just as the Nandi yelled:

"*Simba! Simba!* It's a lion!"

Fortunately my next two shots stopped him. I had only one bullet left in the magazine, and the Nandi was armed with a spear.

The one hundred and twenty men seated complacently by the trail might have witnessed a nice little drama if those two quick shots had not gone home.

How had I made the mistake of thinking a lion a wildebeeste, and of so badly overestimating the range? Well, the refraction of light on the hard surface of the veldt at dawn had served to elongate the lion's legs, and except for this one difference the silhouette of the two animals is quite similar. As for overestimating distance, there is a wide range between a target the size of a small horse and one the size of a St. Bernard dog!

The Swede was an ideal mate, but . . . . . .

Among Those Rescued

By CLARENCE CISIN

MR. ORAN ORANSON was a powerful man, there was no denying that. So nearly six feet the difference wasn't noticeable; big broad shoulders, a fine supple waistline and arms and legs all that they should be. Powerful hands he had, too—big, capable, strong, dangerous looking. He had everything a good chief officer of a tramp steamer should have, as far as the appearance of him went, and he was a smart navigator to boot. Without over-exerting himself he could have merrily banged together the heads of any two men in his crew.

Even a chief officer built like Mr. Oranson should, upon occasion, demonstrate his ability. Knocking an insubordinate man cold now and then, or generously distributing a few discolored eyes, has an excellent tonic effect and keeps a crew content and clear of mischief. In that respect Mr. Oranson was a total failure. He not only never raised his hands to discipline the men; he actually submitted to back-talk without more than a mere verbal rebuke.

The third assistant engineer, Mr. Enders, voiced the opinion of most. The engineer felt well qualified to voice opinions. He could, and did, at a moment's notice, tell any one the trouble with anything. He was a pompous little loud-mouthed man who thought exceptionally well of himself.

"Oranson," declared Mr. Enders, "is yellow. That's all. Just plain yellow. He's a —— rotten coward, that's what he is. Why say! The night our ship sank, who was the first to climb into the lifeboat? Oranson. Who had time to save all his good clothes, while the rest of us were lucky to get off in our underwear? Oranson. And by the time this dirty Greek tub we're on now picked us up he was almost blubbering like a kid. If he ain't yellow I'm a Japanese rickshaw man."

Most of the men nodded agreement. They were lounging about the deck of the Greek ship *Issofogliu* as that vessel steamed up the River Shannon. Picked up five days previously in mid-ocean, theirs had been the only lifeboat rescued from the *S. S. Navahoe*, sunk five hundred miles off the Irish coast.

Boatswain Hurney took a plug of tobacco from his pocket, moodily bit off a large piece, chewed reflectively for a

moment and expectorated in the general direction of the third engineer.

"Mr. Oranson," he remarked, emphasizing the "mister" for the engineer's benefit, "used to be the best chief officer in the Red Funnel Line. He was ruined by a woman."

"I was nearly ruined by a woman," began Mr. Callahan, the fatherly, gray-haired second assistant engineer, "but another woman—"

"Yeah, the Widow O'Keefe, I suppose," interrupted Smith, the carpenter. "Go ahead, Bosun. Tell us how the mate was ruined."

"Two years ago," the boatswain continued, "Mr. Oranson met a woman called Leopoldina who ran a café in Ponta Delgada. Maybe some of you know the place, the Fleur de Lys. Well, this Leopoldina wasn't like most women. She had the kind of eyes that make a man forget everything but the kind of eyes she had." The boatswain paused a moment and took another chew of tobacco.

"Yes," he went on, reflectively, "she certainly had the eyes all right, and the rest of her was fine and trim, too, I can tell you. Mr. Oranson would have swallowed the anchor for her, then and there. She didn't want that. She just wanted to look at him with them eyes of hers, and she hypnotized him. That's what she did, hypnotized him. Told him she could never love a man who wasn't a 'perfect gentleman,' and got him tamed down so's he was as gentle as a counter-jumper. Him that used to be the best two-fisted mate ever I sailed with. Then she lit out with some spick, and he's acted peculiar ever since. Sad and moody and sour, and letting little runts—" he glanced contemptuously at Enders—"get away with being fresh to him. She hypnotized him," he repeated, "—— her!"

"That's a likely yarn," said Enders mockingly. "The poor bosun believes in fairy tales. Hypnotized into being yellow—that's rich! I suppose some lady with eyes looked at the Greek captain of this ship, too, and that's why we get nothing but potatoes and tea three times a day. Poor bosun!"

"What's the difference anyway?" cut in the radio operator. "We'll be in Limerick by five o'clock, and ashore tonight."

"When I get ashore," Mr. Callahan stated, "I'm going to find my old friend, the Widow O'Keefe, and celebrate."

Every one knew that Mr. Callahan's "Widow O'Keefe" meant the first barmaid in the most convenient bar. All of his celebrations were in the company of the same imaginary widow.

"A fine time you'll have without money," Chips reminded pessimistically. "Look at you," he continued, sweeping the crowd with an amused glance. "A sweet looking bunch! Six days without a shave and all dressed up in the cast-off duds of these Greek sailors. If it isn't dark when we land, you'll be lucky if the authorities allow you ashore."

"All except our handsome chief officer," Mr. Enders sneered, slightly lowering his voice as Mr. Oranson appeared on deck.

The mate walked slowly toward the group. About him was an air of utter dejection. His head, with its mass of wavy blond hair, was slightly bowed and his massive shoulders drooped a little. His calm blue eyes seemed intent upon avoiding the glances of the men.

"Mr. Oranson," the engineer called as he drew nearer. "Just a minute, please."

The mate halted and looked at Enders questioningly.

"We were just wondering how you found time to save your best suit, Mr. Oranson," Enders continued smoothly. "You didn't sleep in it did you?"

Mr. Oranson calmly studied the little engineer for a moment before replying.

"Better you keep your mouth shut," he advised, "or sometime I forget you are yust a shrimp. You can go to ——!"

"I've been there," Enders interrupted, "and it's full of Swede mates."

"Some time I show you," promised Mr. Oranson, walking away.

Mr. Enders turned to the boatswain.

"Do you expect any one to believe that yarn about a woman's eyes? I bet that bird was born with a yellow streak. Some day I'm going to take a sock at him."

"Some day they'll swab a grease spot off the deck," Boatswain Hurney retorted. "That'll be you."

IN LESS than an hour the ship anchored in the harbor of Limerick. In the excitement attending going ashore the incident was forgotten. All were frankly exuberant as they stood on the landing float and gave a heartfelt cheer for the departing Greek sailors pulling back to their ship.

A gathering of inquisitive natives stared at the newcomers and speculated audibly about them.

Mr. Oranson addressed a smiling, red-faced man.

"We want a place to put up for das night," he said. "Yust a place to eat and sleep until we get our bearings tomorrow."

"Sure you do," replied the stranger pleasantly. "And you couldn't have asked a better man. Follow me. I know just the place for you."

He set off at a brisk pace and the sailors straggled along behind, forming an unusual parade in their miscellaneous collection of cast-off clothing.

"I run a hotel myself," the stranger remarked conversationally to Mr. Oranson as they walked, "but it's all filled. I'm taking you to the Glentworth—rival of mine but I'm glad to do them a good turn."

"All us Irish are that way," volunteered Mr. Callahan, nodding his gray head approvingly. "I remember once in Southampton there was a fine Irish girl tending bar at the 'Three Nuns,' and she says to me, 'Business is so bad,' she says, 'that it's likely I'll be laid off within the week.' 'Not while my name is Callahan will I leave a colleen in distress,' I said. 'I'll save you your job if I have to get drunk here every day for the next two weeks.'

"And I did, so help me. Stayed there drinking and spent a month's wages just to keep her on the job."

As Mr. Callahan finished talking, the party arrived in front of the Glentworth. The red-faced stranger who had directed them waved a friendly farewell and departed, without waiting to be thanked.

The hotel, an old-fashioned, two-story frame structure, managed to maintain an air of quiet aristocracy despite a rather weather-beaten exterior. The sailors hesitated at the entrance.

Mr. Oranson, after a moment's indecision, pushed open the door and walked boldly to the desk. The rest of the men drifted in after him.

"I would like to speak with das manager," said the mate, addressing a stocky little man who, from his position behind the desk, viewed Mr. Oranson and his group with undisguised hostility.

"You're speaking to him," replied the little man shortly, his hard gray eyes traveling with slow insolence over each of the seamen. "What is it you're after?"

The mate blandly overlooked the manager's attitude.

"Myself and my shipmates," he said, "has had a slight misfortune. We have yust arrived here and will be glad to enyoy your hospitality.

"Of course we will pay," he added as an afterthought, noting that the hotel man's face showed not the faintest trace of a welcoming smile.

The manager pondered the matter before replying.

"My name is Mahoney," he said finally, "and while I'm the manager here, my authority is limited. I'll not tell you 'no' now, take notice, but this is a quiet family hotel. Maybe you'd prefer some other place."

"We are all like a big, quiet, peaceful family," declared Mr. Oranson, determined to win his point. "We don't reckon to be preachers, but we know how to act like yentlemen."

Mahoney shrugged his shoulders and passed over the registry book for the signatures.

"Let's get out of this dump," suggested Mr. Enders audibly, "and push that harp's nose in as a souvenir."

"Quiet!" ordered the mate. "I'm in charge and here we stay."

As Enders opened his mouth to reply, two clergymen stepped to the desk and asked for their keys. Every one signed the book in silence. A young couple, unmistakably honeymooners, came down the stairway and stared apprehensively at the men as they passed.

"What kind of a place is this?" whispered the boatswain resentfully. Only his loyalty to the mate prevented his bolting.

An air of deep gloom settled over the men but lifted when Mr. Callahan suggested a drink.

"It will help us enjoy supper," he said, leading the way into the parlor.

Farm and religious magazines littered the large table in the center of the room and there was a number of solidly built wooden chairs about. An enormous mirror and several sad looking pictures adorned the wall. Everything was in a dark, subdued color, including the wall-paper, and had the effect of making the men feel like talking in whispers. In an attempt to offset the doleful atmosphere of the place Mr. Enders suggested a song.

"We'll sing 'The Night of the Wedding,'" he said. "And you take the tenor, Chips."

Mr. Oranson, sitting in a corner of the room aloof from the others, raised his voice.

"No singing!" he commanded. "This is a quiet family hotel, and you will act like yentlemen."

There was a mumbled protest from some of the men. Mr. Enders walked to the mate and stood directly in front of him.

"We're not on a ship now," he reminded angrily. "The best thing you can do is keep your —— mouth shut!"

Mr. Oranson looked calmly at the belligerent little engineer, realizing that his own authority over the men depended upon the manner in which he resented the insult. He started to rise from his chair, his large hands knotting themselves into sledge-hammer fists. Something in his manner caused the engineer to step back a pace, watching every move with apprehensive interest.

"You little—" began the mate in a voice which was deadly calm. "You little—" he started again, suddenly stopping short as if at a loss for words. He seemed astonished at his own display of violent anger, slumping back into his chair, his eyes staring fixedly at the floor. Drawing a handkerchief from his pocket, he daubed the perspiration which gathered in little beads on his brow.

"No offense," he said at last. "Sing if you want to."

"Well I'll be—" began the bosun, checking himself as the waitress entered the room. In his mind he clearly pictured the woman Leopoldina of the Fleur de Lys who, he knew, was responsible for the mate's inexcusable cowardice. "—— her," he muttered hoarsely, "and all the soft, clinging, useless articles like her!"

The entrance of the waitress had broken the tension of the moment. The men stared at her, lost in admiration of her comeliness. Her presence permeated the room with a pleasant glow of jollity and good comradeship. Talk and laughter became general as the girl moved about the room taking orders.

IN LIMERICK, as in most places, but particularly in Limerick, pretty girls are not uncommon; but the waitress at the Glentworth possessed beauty enough to share with a dozen who were merely pretty. Her eyes had that particular shade of deep blue found nowhere but in the waters of the Arabian Sea, and they were widely spaced. She had a luxuriant mass of wavy hair, colored to match the leaves of the trees in autumn, wound in long braids about her well shaped head. And she was slim and lissom and carried herself with an enchanting lack of self-consciousness which accentuated her natural grace.

Mr. Oranson looked long at the girl. She awakened in him some secret spring of hidden memory. Indefinable sensations of warmth and color, soft and alluring, coursed through his veins, quickening his pulse-beat. Heedless of all else, he stared at her until the force of his concentration drew her eyes toward his. He arose as the girl approached him, and extended his hand in friendly greeting. Possibly because of his very intensity there was nothing of forwardness about his action, and the waitress placed her hand in his, smiling up at him with warm friendliness.

"You remind me," he said, and with such sincerity it was impossible to doubt him, "of a woman who is now only a dream to me. I loved her." He paused, suddenly conscious of the crowded room, and released her hand. "It seem to me," he continued in a forced effort to talk less seriously, "das you are the most beautiful waitress of any woman I have ever seen."

"I was born to be a queen," the girl replied laughingly. "'Tis only circumstances that forced me to be a waitress."

Boatswain Hurney nudged Chips and whispered:

"Woman is the devil's navigating officer. More dangerous than shoal water. Blasted useless articles!"

Mr. Enders was visibly impressed. Almost any fairly attractive woman stirred him and lent spice to what he otherwise considered a rather drab existence; and here, he thought, was a perfect beauty.

He became acutely conscious of his appearance and, without a word to any one, strode from the room in quest of a barber shop.

"You remind me of the Wid—of Miss O'Keefe," stated Mr. Callahan jovially, "only you are prettier by far, although I had thought till now that she was the handsomest girl ever I'd laid eyes upon."

The girl's laughter sounded clear as gently swaying silver bells. Far from being flustered, she appeared truly amused. She looked inquiringly at the carpenter.

"And you?" she asked.

"Miss," said Chips, rising to the occasion, "I've seen pretty girls from Panama to Singapore; from Shanghai to Paris; from Valencia to New York City; but you're the first I've ever been able to truthfully call beautiful."

"You forgot Yokohoma, Kobe and the Philippines," said the boatswain sarcastically, giving Chips a disgusted look.

"I think you've all been kissing the Blarney Stone," the waitress declared. "And now I'll be getting you gentlemen your drinks," she added, as she left the room.

The evening passed with much pleasant exchange of hilarious comment. Jokes and stories were told and retold and shouts of laughter and snatches of ribald songs echoed throughout the hotel.

Mr. Enders had returned, freshly shaved and carrying a strong barber-shop perfume odor about him. Somewhere he had found a furnishing store with a trusting proprietor. He sported a bright blue-and-gold necktie, a gray silk shirt and a brown felt hat tilted at a rakish angle. He was as cocky as a little pouter pigeon and as sure of himself as a prize-winning peacock.

He had engaged the waitress in conversation and learned that her name was Claire Brady, following which he immediately began addressing the girl as Claire. Later in the evening he found occasion to speak to her alone, and he lost no time in impressing her with the fact that he was a brave and dashing fellow. Always, in the incidents he related, he had played an outstanding heroic rôle. He also mentioned that the mate, Mr. Oranson, was a notorious coward, adding that he had personally thrashed the mate on several occasions.

Mr. Enders also did his utmost to arrange a meeting with the girl after her work for the night was finished. In this he was unsuccessful but, having had considerable experience in such affairs, he felt confident that it was merely a matter of biding his time.

Mr. Oranson had mustered up sufficient courage to invite the girl to go for a walk with him, but again she had refused. In her refusal, however, she managed to convey the impression that possibly some other time—

AT A LITTLE past eleven o'clock Mr. Mahoney, the manager, appeared and announced that the bar was closed for the night. He said that numerous guests had complained about the noise, and suggested that the men call it a night and retire. To his apparent surprize, the men agreed with him, and obediently filed out of the room. Most were still sober enough to walk unaided up the one flight of stairs to their rooms on the second floor. Mr. Callahan and the carpenter required a little assistance, and they insisted on singing the chorus of "Maggie's Funeral," but before long all were safely in their rooms and the hotel regained its usual air of peaceful quietude.

Mr. Callahan had crawled under the covers of his bed, after partially undressing himself, but he was in no mood for slumber. Thoughts, interesting though vague, floated leisurely across his mental vision; thoughts as shadowy and unrelated as feathery clouds drifting along the edge of a far horizon. He was calmly happy, mildly mellow and unusually contemplative.

The tenor of Mr. Callahan's thoughts changed with sudden abruptness. There was a crystallization of the unrelated substances which had been dreamily running through his mind. With a jerky movement which scattered his bedclothes upon the floor, he sat up straight in his bed. He felt enthusiastic, inspired. He delightedly whacked his thigh and chuckled aloud in joyous appreciation of himself.

"The suffering Armenians," he shouted, under the impression that he was whispering. "The poor, suffering Armenians! Always being chased by Turks. Always running and running and most of 'em without shoes to run in. Shoes! That's what they need, shoes!" Courageously he restrained the tears of sympathy which these thoughts brought to his eyes.

"So many shoes lying about this hotel corridor," he reasoned, rolling from the bed and landing with a heavy thud upon the floor. Gingerly he picked himself up and stared angrily for a moment at the bed.

"Thought you could throw me," he said, shaking his fist at it. "Well, you couldn't keep me down."

Switching on the light, Mr. Callahan complacently viewed himself in the mirror. He was still wearing a necktie, his underclothes and his shoes and socks. His jacket was flung over a near-by chair and he fumbled around in the pockets until he found his pipe, tobacco and some matches. Throwing his coat back on the floor, he filled his pipe and struck a match. After a few contented puffs, he carelessly threw the match upon the floor and started from his room in his search of shoes.

Had any one noticed Mr. Callahan prowling about the corridor, there probably would have been an alarm given. He made a furtive figure, slinking along with his underclothes flapping whitely above his socks and shoes and his necktie twisted halfway around his neck. The dimly lighted hall confused Mr. Callahan with its many shadows, and his progress was slow. In front of each door he stooped for a moment, snatched up a pair of shoes and tip-toed on.

By the time he reached the boatswain's room his arms could hold no more. Carefully depositing his load in the hall, he hammered on the door. Getting no response, he tried the handle, found the room unlocked and walked in.

"Who's there?" demanded the boatswain, awakening with a start.

"Shhh," the engineer admonished, "it's all right. This is Mr. Callahan, Bosun. Just your little old shipmate Callahan. We've got to help the Armenians, old-timer. I've got it all figured out."

"You're right," the boatswain replied, deciding to humor the old man. "We must talk this over in the morning."

"No. I've got it all figured out now," Callahan insisted. "What the Armenians need is shoes and I've got them. Can I bring them in?"

"Sure." The boatswain was confident that the engineer's imagination was running full ahead. He got out of his bed and switched on the light.

Callahan stepped into the hall and returned a minute later, his arms encircling a load of shoes. He unceremoniously dumped them in the center of the room.

"I could have gotten more," he stated, "but some rooms didn't have any outside the door. Ain't some people unpatriotic?"

The boatswain's answer was smothered by a piercing scream that tore through the stillness of the hotel. Somewhere in the house an hysterical woman was shouting "Fire! Fire!" At once, it seemed, the cry was taken up by a dozen voices. Doors flew open and shouting, gesticulating, panic-stricken men and women rushed wildly into the corridor. The narrow stairway at the far end of the hall was the only means of descent and it was toward this goal that the crowd frantically struggled.

Fear, uncontrollable, unreasoning, gripped the scurrying guests as they madly pushed one another in an effort to escape. The top steps of the narrow stairway were so jammed by those who had reached there simultaneously that it was impossible to proceed, and they effectively blocked the terrified group in the rear.

Mr. Callahan and the boatswain stood just outside their own room, calmly watching the excitement. Mr. Callahan was vexed at the interruption.

"Let 'em alone," he urged, grasping the boatswain's arm and attempting to push him back into the room. "We've got a more important matter to decide. The Armenians—"

"Look!" the boatswain commanded, pointing toward the stairs. "There's Enders! The swine just pushed a woman out of his way and he's—"

Without waiting to finish the sentence, the boatswain started down the hall. His one thought was to reach Enders before the engineer escaped down the stairs.

Mr. Enders made a sorrowful figure. Crazed with fear, he was indiscriminately pushing men and women in his effort to gain the stairway. As he reached the top step he violently elbowed a woman near him. She turned quickly and struck him full in the face with her closed fist. It was a solid, smartly delivered blow, and Mr. Enders' nose commenced to bleed profusely.

"You ——!" he shrieked, turning fiercely upon her.

He intended to strike the woman and his hand was poised for the blow. As he saw her face he was amazed to recognize Claire Brady. He hesitated, bewildered, and became suddenly conscious of his cowardice.

"Do you call yourself a man?" the girl asked. "You draggle-tail mud-lark! You dreggy coward!"

Mr. Oranson had stepped out of one of the rooms close by.

"Das fire is out! Das fire is out!" he shouted, in a voice which could have been heard above a roaring gale and which carried above all the noise and confusion in the corridor.

Mr. Enders took advantage of this turn and made a hurried exit from the hotel.

People stopped and began asking themselves and each other what it was all about. None, apparently, had seen flames of any sort, although the atmosphere still held traces of the odor of burning cloth.

Mr. Mahoney pushed his way to the center of the corridor and, in a voice of authority, requested silence.

"What do you know about all this?" he asked Mr. Oranson. "Is it one of your —— jokes you're playin' or what is it?"

"Yokes?" Mr. Oranson towered angrily above the manager. "Yokes?" he repeated indignantly. "I am waked up from sleep by cry 'Fire.' I come out to corridor and see nothing but people gone crazy rushing around. No fire. Nothing but little smoke from this room—" he indicated the room from which he had emerged— "I go in and find a coat smoldering near das bed on floor. Quick I stamp on it and tell people dat fire is out. You think das a yoke?"

"My mistake," Mahoney apologized.

Without another word he turned and went downstairs. The rest of the guests eyed the mate hostilely as they returned to their rooms.

Claire Brady remained after the others had all gone.

"You're a fine brave man," she said to the mate, "and I thank you for what you have done tonight."

"Dat's all right."

Mr. Oranson didn't know what else to say, so he said nothing. He wanted, more than anything else, to take her in his arms and kiss her. But, try as he did, all he could think to say was to repeat—

"Dat's all right."

"Good night," the girl said softly.

In a moment she was gone, leaving Mr. Oranson bewildered but extremely happy. Visions of future happiness shared with Claire Brady persisted in his mind long after he had returned to his room. He was quite certain that he was in love with her.

Boatswain Hurney managed to get the still talkative Mr. Callahan down the corridor and into his own quarters. After searching for and finding some matches in the engineer's trousers and transferring them to his own, he left the room and locked the door on the outside. The boatswain returned to the pile of shoes and dumped them in the center of the hall.

ALL THE next day, Mr. Enders was conspicuous by his absence. Some of the men surmised that he'd quietly slip out of town without showing up again at the hotel. Mr. Oranson refused to discuss the engineer, and had himself been absent the greater part of the day. Upon his return just before supper he appeared unusually elated. His entire bearing indicated that some unexpected good fortune had befallen him.

Claire Brady stopped to talk to him as he was about to enter the parlor and she made no attempt to conceal the admiration in her eyes as she looked up at him. As they talked, Mr. Enders sauntered into the hotel. He had completely regained his composure and appeared as cocky and self-assertive as ever. He deliberately edged himself between Mr. Oranson and the girl, carelessly elbowing the mate as he did so.

"Claire," he began, "I want to explain about last night. There—"

"Your actions explained themselves."

"But you've got to listen to me," he insisted. "I thought you were downstairs last night and I wanted to get to you."

Mr. Oranson interrupted the engineer by roughly pushing him to one side.

"You big yellow Swede!" Enders said, turning on the mate with a snarl. "I'm going to push your face in for that!"

"Yust be calm, Mr. Enders," advised the mate quietly. "You will have a chance to push faces when there is another fire."

The waitress stepped between the men.

"Gentlemen, please, not here," she pleaded.

"All right," Enders replied, rather glad of the interruption. "But you're going to get a beating just the same," he continued, addressing Oranson. He was commencing to feel a bit less confident of himself, and he wondered, as he turned and walked toward the parlor, whether he had imagined a change in the mate's attitude.

"Women and children first," Oranson shouted after him.

"Why don't you give that little runt the licking he deserves?" the waitress asked. "He's been doing nothing but tell me that you were afraid of him and scared to death of fighting anyway. Up till last night I almost believed him. I could never love a man who couldn't handle himself well in a fight," she finished.

"Some day I show him," Mr. Oranson promised. "Don't worry. And will you meet me tonight after you finish work?"

"Sure," she assented. "About ten o'clock."

She hurried away and the mate went into the parlor, sitting down at a table near Mr. Callahan.

As on the previous night, Irish whisky proved the favorite drink, and the men indulged freely. The mate was particularly jovial and friendly. As each round of drinks was served he arose and made a toast to some member of the crew of the Greek ship which had rescued them. He started with the ship's captain, toasted each of the officers and engineers in turn, and had reached the quartermasters when Mr. Callahan interrupted him.

"Let's drink the next toast to Claire Brady," he suggested, as the waitress passed the glasses around. Every one cheered the idea.

"Here's to Claire Brady, then," Callahan began, rising and holding his glass aloft. "May she have love, laughter, long life and a seafaring sweetheart!"

All responded with raised glasses and noisy approbation.

A tall, dark, scowling man had entered the room just as the engineer finished. He stood near the door, viewing the proceedings with unrestrained contempt. Satisfied with his survey of the men, he strode to Mr. Callahan and, with a quick sweep of his muscular arm, knocked that astonished individual's glass from his hand. The glass and the drink spattered upon the floor. The engineer pinched his own arm and muttered, "I must be dreaming," as the stranger turned his back upon him, walked to the center of the room and exclaimed:

"Ye swine! Ye filthy, scurvy, deck-swabbin' whisky-guzzlers! Ye—— half-drunk, insolent bunch of sea-bums! How dare yez mention the name of Claire Brady? How dare yez profane a dacent, innocent, beautiful girl by the familiarity of such as yeself? Answer me that fair or I'll crush yez like the worms yez are!"

There was a minute in which no one moved or spoke. Mr. Enders was the first to stir, and he discreetly edged nearer the door in order to be prepared for hasty retreat.

Mr. Oranson looked at the waitress. She was trembling with excitement and her flushed face and angry expression denoted the resentment she felt. Intuitively she turned toward him, making a little appealing gesture with her hands. Briefly her eyes searched his and her head moved in a barely perceptible nod.

Slowly the mate rose to his feet and advanced to within arms length of the wild-eyed stranger. His calm blue eyes and peaceful expression gave no indication of the tumultuous battle raging in his mind. Something which he could but dimly perceive was happening to him. A mental haze, as real as any fog through which he had ever piloted a ship, seemed to be lifting.

Steadily he met the gaze of smoldering rage and scorn with which the Irishman viewed him. Only the huge, tightly doubled fists of the mate betrayed his intent.

"Yentlemen," Mr. Oranson stated quietly, "do not you use such talk like yours with a lady standing by. We—" he included his shipmates with a sweeping glance—"are seamen and are not sissies. But we are yentlemen and will teach you how to act like yentlemen.

"Miss Claire," he continued, addressing the girl, "you will please go outside."

"All right," she said, walking to the door. She paused and added, "Don't forget we're going walking later." She smiled confidently as she went out.

"Then it's a corpse you'll be walkin' with," the Irishman shouted after her.

At the same moment, his body swaying slightly toward Mr. Oranson, he swung viciously for the mate's head.

Quick as the action had been, Mr. Oranson managed to block the blow with his left arm, throwing the antagonist out of position. Balancing lightly on the balls of his feet he returned an accurately gaged, crashing, full-armed punch carrying all the weight of his body behind it, that connected solidly with the Irishman's chin. The stranger's limp body hit the floor a second later, rolled into a sprawling posture and remained as if in deep and tranquil slumber.

Mr. Enders' mouth was open in amazement. He had so confidently expected to see the mate annihilated that he refused to credit his eyesight.

"Squarehead luck!" he shouted, allowing his hatred to overcome his discretion, and pushing aside one of the men in his eagerness to get within striking distance of the mate. "I'll show you up, you big yellow—"

The sentence ended unfinished due to a sharp uppercut which Mr. Oranson, without any visible effort, placed on the tip of Enders' jaw. There was just the suggestion of a sigh from the engineer's parted lips as he sank to the floor, his body partly covering the form of the still unconscious Irishman.

The room was in an uproar. Men, previously the best of shipmates, cursed at and fought with each other. The carpenter had been secretly nursing a grievance against Mr. Oranson and started the cry, "Get the mate!" Others, acting with that lack of logic which is the distinguishing mark of mob violence, joined him and cries of "Get the mate!" mingled with the crash of the chandelier as it smashed to the floor.

Some one threw an empty bottle, aiming for Mr. Oranson, but hitting one of the sad looking pictures on the wall. There was a merry tinkle of breaking glass as the remains of bottle and picture fell. Old Mr. Callahan rallied to the aid of the fallen Enders by throwing a chair in what he thought was the direction of the mate, but which landed against the large mirror that reposed on the wall in a gilded frame.

"Here's the start of your seven years' hard luck," the boatswain shouted, barely making himself heard above the noise and confusion.

He tapped Mr. Callahan over the head with the leg of one of the broken chairs as he spoke. The engineer toppled over on to the floor, knocking over a tray and half a dozen glasses as he fell.

While Smith, the carpenter, grappled with Mr. Oranson, the wireless operator attempted to down the mate from behind. Oranson bent low from the waist, moved his powerful shoulders up and forward, heaving the operator over his head with terrific force, directly at Smith. Carpenter and wireless operator went down together, taking the table with them.

The entire affair had lasted a brief three minutes, but the floor was strewn with corpse-like bodies lying in grotesque positions, and broken glass and furniture littered everything.

Boatswain Hurney looked about him and smiled contentedly. He felt completely at peace with the world. Taking a plug of tobacco from his pocket, he bit off a large piece. Then, without a word to the mate, he walked out of the hotel.

Mr. Oranson remained standing in the center of the room. His calm blue eyes showed only the mild interest of one viewing a familiar sight. His thoughts were, in truth, dwelling upon the beauty of Claire Brady. He speculated pleasantly regarding the probable praise she would bestow upon him.

Glancing toward the doorway, he was astonished to behold the object of his admiration. So quietly had she walked that her approach had been unnoticed. There was neither friendliness nor admiration in the way she looked at Mr. Oranson.

The mate was the first to speak.

"Miss Claire," he said simply, "I would like you for be my sweetheart. Maybe some day we—"

"You're a fool," interrupted the girl, harshly. "A fool and a brute! If there weren't another man in the world I'd have nothing to do with a wild animal like yourself. Knocking down one of the best men in Ireland, and half murdering your own shipmates! And standin' there smirking, like you were proud of the job!"

Mr. Oranson didn't reply. He merely stared at the girl in astonishment, trying to grasp the significance of her remarks. After a moment he walked toward her, fists clenched, scowling, looking for all the world as if he intended to add her to the list of casualties. He stood directly in front of her. For the first time in her life she feared to meet any one's gaze and her eyes sought the floor. Suddenly she looked up—and gasped. He was actually laughing!

"Woman's place," he said scornfully, "is in das kitchen."

Then he walked out into the deserted lobby of the hotel and to the street.

WHISTLING gayly as he walked, he headed for the waterfront. A small, sociable looking sailors' lodging house attracted his attention. It sported a large sign, upon which, in foot-high letters was printed, "For Gentlemen Only."

Mr. Oranson went in and walked to the bar, against which rested the familiar figure of Boatswain Hurney.

"Mr. Oranson," exclaimed the boatswain, admiringly, "that was as fine a fight as I've seen. If you don't mind my saying so, sir," he continued earnestly, choosing his words with great care, "I always knew that some day you'd break the spell of that woman's eyes and—"

"Yust a moment, Bosun," Mr. Oranson interrupted. "Are you crazy or yust drunk? Woman's eyes? Spell? What woman?"

"Why—why—Leopoldina, of course."

"Leopoldina? Leopoldina?" Mr. Oranson was honestly puzzled as he searched his memory for some recollection of the name.

"Don't you remember Leopoldina of the Fleur de Lys at Ponta Delgada?" the boatswain asked, unwilling to credit his ears. "I thought she was the reason you changed—" he hesitated and then plunged on — "you wouldn't fight or—"

"I didn't fight, Bosun," Mr. Oranson explained, "because a doctor told me if I did, or got too excited, I would get too high blood pressure and maybe kick off. Yesterday I see another doctor who said I was sound like a steel deck. So I simply began taking my exercise again.

"The trouble with you, Bosun," he continued, after a slight pause, "is you think too much about women. Woman's place is in das kitchen."

He raised his glass in friendly salute.

"Down the hatches," he said, tossing it off.

"I Met Callahan Today"

BY DONALD M. TAYLOR

I MET Callahan today as I was going to lunch. He was, too. So we ate together and we talked about this and that. When did he come to town? Was he going to be here permanent? Was I married? So was he. We each had two, boy and a girl. So we shook hands again across the table, quit being polite and began to talk about what we wanted to talk about.

I saw Jim Wilson crawl across a field, while overhead destruction whined in twenty tongues. It darted now and then at him in snarling jabs.

I saw him reach young Smitty, clutch his collar in a business-like and unheroic grip and then start creeping back.

I saw them lying side by side on stretchers, waiting for the medico; Jim reaching wire-raked fingers down to probe the damage done his whipcord breeches. I heard him wail:

"Oh, what a sap! All torn to bloody shreds! Why ain't I ever had the guts to make that hard-boiled sergeant issue me an extra pair of pants for dirty work?"

I saw Pete Bromick, the only man that ever volunteered to furnish jew's-harp music for a guard mount, standing in the center of the Bourg-Brenns road, so fat and vacant-eyed that half-blind Madame Hudelot, driving her silly cattle from the water trough, struck at him with her stick.

I saw Lou Horton standing with a mighty effort, stiff and straight, before his captain, who years before had been his company clerk when they were in the Islands.

"Again!"

And Captain Moffatt, red-cheeked, trim and polished, boot and belt, almost strangled over his disgust.

"It's bad enough to be forever drunk, but you must steal your liquor! If we weren't going up tomorrow you'd go in the guard house and stand trial. You've made a rotten mess of life. This is the end. The best thing you can do is get bumped off!"

"Yes, sir," I heard Lou Horton answer.

I saw the red-cheeked Captain Moffatt run and duck and run and duck until he reached old Colonel Clayton's bedding roll. And then I saw him run and duck and run and duck until he reached the shallow trench where Horton—or what was left of Horton—lay wheezing, leaking out his life.

"It's whisky, Lou—old Clayton's," Moffatt panted, holding the bottle down and Horton up to meet it. "Good whisky, Lou."

The whisky gurgled down Lou Horton's throat. His eyes stayed shut but soon his lips essayed a tortured whisper.

"Mud in—your eyes," said Lou. "You old ink—sling—ing—booze thie—f-f-f."

And then he grinned, went limp in Moffatt's arms, sputtered and went out, while Moffatt puffed and blushed and cried.

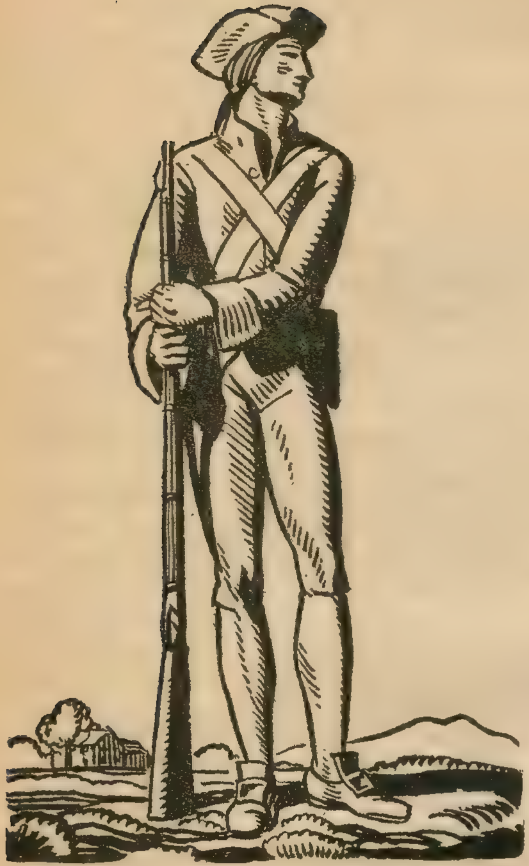
I saw these things today because Callahan and I—after he had asked me this and that and I had asked him this and that, politely—asked and told the things we hadn't had a chance to ask or tell each other since we bunked side by side upstairs in Billet Seventeen at Bourg, while Bromick down below played on his rusty jew's-harp, endless, tuneless things.

"What are you doing tomorrow noon?" asked Cal.

"Now let me ask a silly question," I answered, and we both grinned foolish grins.

Winds of

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE By



In the Dungeon of the Prison Ship

CHAPTER I

THE BLACK FRIGATE TAVERN

THERE was a roar and a rush of wind outside the hut and a tattoo of rain on the window panes. Loose shakes on the roof slatted at every gust. The insecure door strained against the lock, shivered and groaned and threatened to burst open at each thrust of the tempest. It was not a particularly well constructed hut, for a dozen cold cross-currents of air swept in between the logs where the chinking was thin, plucked at the lantern's light and congealed the blood of young Jeffry Peale who sat patiently before an open copy of Grotius and at intervals annotated certain persuasive passages. It was early 1777, with Washington's army resting on arms amid the Morristown hills. Spring broke gustily over the winter-bound brigades and glutted the streams that poured into a British-infested valley below.

Jeffry Peale wrapped the cloak tighter about his neck and tried to sustain his interest in the volume. It took a man of persistent studiousness or strong ambition to keep at such labor in this dreary, frigid cell and, though Peale had more than the usual share of those qualities, the blood ran too strongly in him to make a monkish penance of it. He had done well enough for one bitter night and it was time to hasten toward that haven of warmth and cheer where his brother officers long had been—the Black Frigate Tavern—and thaw the marrow in his bones.

Through the window he saw a light advancing toward the hut, blurred to a vague oval in the turbulent night. An officer of the guard, no doubt, making the rounds. He rose to stamp over the boards and clap on his hat. Life had about gone out of his limbs, and his fingers were as stiff as those of a marble statue. That came, he said to himself in a moment of self-derision, of coveting too much glory and advancement.

Sometimes it seemed better to drift good naturedly, as did the rest of the subalterns, making the most of a disagreeable campaign, drinking to the tavern keeper's daughter in between the sudden raids on the low country. But, even as he

Rebellion

ERNEST HAYCOX

thus abjured himself, his mind, clear and retentive, was conning the passages on military law which he had just finished reading. It was an acquisitive, pushing habit that no amount of depression or discouragement could shake off.

"As long as you are Jeffry Peale," he murmured, striving to tie the cloak, "you'll be wanting to march on. So make the most of it, my lad."

The long threatening door swept open and slammed violently against the inner wall; at the same time an orderly wrapped in a blanket and showing only two bleak eyes above the folds, was thrust across the threshold.

"L'tenant Peale, the brigadier wishes your comp'ny at his quarters as soon's possible."

The orderly accepted the other's nod and, pulling the door shut after him, vanished into the darkness.

Peale tarried a minute, essaying to fathom the meaning of the summons. His conscience, however, was clear, and with a small excitement rising in his breast he left the hut and forged his way across an uneven, stumpy parade ground. The wind attacked him viciously, first on one quarter, then on the other. The rain sluiced out of the sky and stung his face like so many darts, and it was with real relief that he passed between a row of huts and entered a grove of trees where the storm was slightly broken. Just beyond was the brigadier's quarters. He clapped one hand to his hat and knocked at the door. In a moment it was opened slightly and an urgent voice said:

"Make it quick, man! This —— place is stone cold."

Peale slipped quickly through. The door banged shut and began a steady *rat-a-tat* against its loose hinges, leaving the lieutenant confronting the lone occupant of the room, the general of the brigade. The young man stood silent, astonished at the situation. It was not often that general officers of the Continental Line rose to admit subalterns.

This swart, medium-sized man with the frank, bold face, had a reputation for dispensing with formality between himself and his men. Once a private soldier himself, he knew how to command affection and respect at the same time. Other generals might insist on their personal guard, but no sentry stood outside of Maxwell's door to suffer in the wind. And doubtless he had sent his aide off to the Black Frigate to get warm. It was the measure of an officer who was beginning to command a reputation as a heady fighter in vanguard skirmishes.

"Come to the light," said the general, stepping behind his camp desk.

Peale did as ordered and felt himself sharply studied from the half shadows.

"You come well recommended," continued the older officer. "It is a fine body you carry around. Where did you get that sweep of shoulders?"

"My father put me to the forge as soon as I could hold a hammer," said Peale.

"Aye, I know *that* type. One of those yeomen who insists on every keg standing on its own bottom. I could wish for more of that brand of independence. The war would sooner end. Tell me, have you traveled much around the city of New York?"

"I spent some months there in '73."

"D'ye know the country between here and the Hudson shore?"

Peale thought a moment.

"I made but one trip, but I have studied the maps at quite some length."

"Enough to make the trip by dark?"

Peale was not certain of that, but he was not the man to lag behind opportunity. So he answered boldly—

"Yes, sir."

The general was silent for some time. When he spoke it was as if to himself.

"Good muscle, good limb. Apparently sound of wind. A swordsman of parts, so your captain said, and with the address of a gentleman. 'Tis those things that matter in a tight situation. A little boldness goes far. Tell me, can you swim—I mean well?"

"My home is on a sound, sir. I believe I hold some records for outdistancing men of the district."

The general moved to his desk and nodded.

"That's all. I suppose you'll be going down to the tavern to thaw. I wish I could."

Jeffry Peale turned away, grievously disappointed. Some signal duty had hovered over him and vanished; the mark of that disappointment must have showed on his ruddy cheeks, for the general's eyes flashed in a friendly manner.

"Tut, sir. If you knew the trouble ahead you'd not be so hard after the mission. Go drink your porto and be thankful for a moment or two of warmth in this infernally bleak world."

"I could wish the honor of any service the general might trust me with," said Peale, tarrying at the door.

"It may yet fall to you when other eggs are broken," replied Maxwell cryptically. "If you see my aide at the tavern send him to me."

Peale embarked across the stormy parade with a heavy heart.

"Whatever the duty," he muttered, "it will go to another. Some Southern macaroni, no doubt, with the air of a cavalier."

What good of studying Grotius when promotion came to the man who looked like a fighter and talked like a fighter? He struggled against the elements, bearing off on a very muddy road that led beyond the lines. Earth and sky melted into one vast orbit of tumult as he traveled, eyes fixed on the light from the guard-house.

He did himself great injustice when he marked himself so low in appearance. But that was the pessimistic Puritan strain which had conspired for many generations to keep his folk humble. Independent they might be, and greatly set on their rights, but when it came to personal valuation they were strangely diffident, disparaging.

He met the guard's challenge and passed through the lines. The highway was a sea of slush that came high around his boots. Once he heard the splash of hoofs and stepped aside to let a cavalcade pass him. Another scouting party returned from the lowlands. There were more of these detachments out lately, Peale decided, as he picked up the glimmer of the tavern, directly ahead. The army was waking from its long slumber and now was fencing and feinting with small parties. Feeling greatly dispirited, Peale shook the water from his cloak and let himself into the thick and warm air of the tavern.

It was such a tavern as might have been found on any road in any State—a long, low-ceilinged room with a few tables scattered about. Obviously it had been built for modest traffic and modest profits, for it fairly bulged under the score or more of officers now within. They were of all uniforms and all ages and illustrated perfectly the tremendous sectional difference of the thirteen States.

Some were neat and dapper and carried their regimentals with pride; others wore the clothes like so much draping. Connecticut and Maryland rubbed elbows with civility and kept company each with its own kind. Through the fog of tobacco smoke Jeffry Peale saw a familiar face and crowded his way past several groups to one small corner where a brother officer, Priam Lafferty, sat alone.

The man cast an irritated glance at Peale—a glance that fell just short of the latter's eyes—and spoke in a brusk, clipped voice.

"Thought your books held you home this night, Jeff?"

There was one vacant chair beside Lafferty and Peale dropped into it.

"Frozen out. 'Tis bitter weather, Priam. Look at the mud on my boots."

Lafferty nodded, eyes traveling across the crowded room as if seeking some one in particular. Peale caught the tavern keeper's glance and raised a crooked finger, deciding that Lafferty must again be in one of his frequent moods of sulky moroseness. There was no accounting for the man's swift changing of humor, and Peale who had known him from boyhood shrugged his shoulders and dismissed it from his mind.

The two of them face to face made a great contrast. Peale kept himself groomed and though not far advanced in his twenties his face already was beginning to settle in steadfast lines; he had apparently passed the period of turbulence and had found himself. Perhaps his hazel eyes were not very happy, for he shared his father's oft-expressed belief that happiness was a thing people spent too much time in seeking, but they were most certainly direct and level and when his interest was strongly aroused they contracted slightly and gave the effect of tremendous penetrative power.

They were of about the same age, but Lafferty had gone more to bone and bulk. His was one of those bodies that are lumpy and disproportionate enough to make any suit of clothes look shoddy. When he slouched in the chair, a slack-lipped, rebellious-eyed creature whose face was a playground for every passing emotion, his waistcoat bulged untidily. His chin needed shaving and the coarse jet hair of his head, here and there streaked with white, was untrimmed. There seemed to be a magnet in the far corner of the room that irresistibly drew his somber attention.

Peale caught sight of the tavern keeper's daughter flirting outrageously with a Jersey captain and chuckled a little. Priam Lafferty was in a murderous mood just then, he knew.

"The girl treats you badly, Priam. But 'tis nothing to nurse a broken heart over."

Lafferty's murky eyes rolled.

"If she's wishin' to introduce that gentleman to a duel—"

"Chut! Y've led yourself into this taproom love affair, Priam. D'ye think she's the kind to be led by any single man? Trim yards and square into the wind. 'Tis money in her father's pocket to be engaging to all."

Lafferty underwent one of his characteristic shifts of temper and grinned sourly.

"Oh, I know I'm a bigger fool than most. *You* may talk of ridin' on an even keel, for that's in your very marrow. I've yet to see the event that'll shiver you. But you sh'd know I'm not the one to live that way."

"No," agreed Peale, "you're not. 'Tis the whole jug of rum for you or not a drop. Sometimes I could wish myself a little like that."

He took the glass of wine brought by the tavern keeper, exchanged a sober word with the man and began to sip deliberately. He felt the warmth come back into his body; a little drowsy, he watched figures shifting through the tobacco smoke and heard the rise and fall of voices. Such words as came intelligibly to him dwelt entirely with home affairs. How easily men slipped away from martial ardor when the chance came.

He looked for General Maxwell's aide in vain and found himself smiling at sight of an ancient uncle sprawled before the fireplace, legs widespread and a mug of mulled cider in his fist. He was all of forty-five and yet but a subaltern. Only a New Englander, Peale decided, could make such a picture of fireside contentment. Coat and waistcoat were thrown wide open and hat was laid aside. A nutcracker face with a pair of bright, mellow eyes stared into the amber flames. Peale felt ashamed of his mirth. There was unquenchable spirit in a man like that who would forsake comfort for the field.

He let the wine trickle past his tongue and put the glass against the light. Purple rays shot through the liquid. Then he heard Priam Lafferty speaking staccato phrases—

"Lieutenant Jeffry Peale—Mr. Otto Trevoris — a friend of mine passing through on business."

Drowsiness deserted Peale. He looked up to find a man of middle age bowing ceremoniously; an attentive, unsmiling man dressed in severe civilian's black and leaning slightly on a cane. Peale rose and offered his place gravely, but the other had spied an empty chair at a near table and drew it over, taking seat between the two and resting both hands on the table. Peale looked sharply at the cane and made certain mental reservations; he had seen such cleverly contrived things before and usually they sheathed swords. When his eyes raised they came in conflict with those of Trevoris, and for a moment a singular and studious exchange of glances took place.

Priam Lafferty broke this duel with a short laugh, fist smashing on the table top.

"Strike me, I've waited five minutes for a drink. Hi, Benedick! Advance with the wine gourds!"

"It is dev'lish cold out," said the stranger, Trevoris, shaking his shoulders. They were not broad shoulders but Peale was struck by their precise erectness.

"I pity any man who must travel abroad in it," rejoined Peale.

"Then pity me," said Trevoris. He watched the inn keeper bearing up with bottle and glass and poured himself a drink which, after raising it to both men, he tossed down with a gulp. " 'Tis rank stuff to be calling port," he muttered, "but will serve to keep the cold out. I've yet five miles ahead of me to the Star and Crescent."

"You have traveled from a distance?" asked Peale, mildly curious.

Priam Lafferty's saturnine face turned toward him, scowling from some new dissatisfaction. Trevoris helped himself to fresh wine and played with the glass stem.

"From Spanish New Orleans," said he, surveying the smoke and the crowd with an air of ill-concealed scorn.

Peale's interest was instantly aroused.

"That's a trip I could wish to take. Tell me, how do you find the country between here and the Mississippi? It must be dev'lish hard going. 'Tis a land for a man with a good rifle eye, is it not?"

Trevoris shrugged those erect shoulders and seemed bored.

"If a gentleman likes hardships I would commend it. As for me, it seems like God's own wilderness."

"Nevertheless," insisted Peale, "it is the place for the common soldier when this war is won. Cheap land and plenty of elbow room. The seaboard is crowded and the South belongs to the nabobs. Give all us old soldiers a hundred acres on the Ohio and we'll fashion a new State for you. But, tell me of New Orleans. How large a place is it?"

Trevoris took another drink and seemed amused. Priam Lafferty broke in impatiently.

"Oh, —— the catechism, Jeff! Who cares about New Orleans? Choke off the inquisition. Never have I seen the like of such a man to ask questions. Anything from awls to elephants will command your attention. Here's a toast to the pot-gutted Benedick and his fair daughter."

Peale smiled a little and drank. Trevoris put down his glass and looked to his watch.

"I dislike most infernally to start off, but I must reach Albany Monday, a sennight. Gentlemen, I give you one to his Excellency General Washington and the next campaign. May the army win its just desserts."

"With all my heart," said Peale, bowing.

Trevoris' face was satiric; Priam Lafferty stared at him, somber-eyed, half unwilling to drink. In the end he swallowed the liquor and began a tapping on the table with his nails.

"Well, the army must win somethin'," he grumbled. "We're a starved, frozed lot now."

"In New York, I hear," said Trevoris, "they eat, dance and are merry." He rose and threw a silver piece on the table. "I must be going, disagreeable as it is. Mr. Peale, it has been a pleasure. I trust I will see more of you."

Priam Lafferty passed a hand across his rumpled hair, frowning heavily.

"Enough of this cursed babble for me. I'll see you to your horse and then go home."

They crossed the room and stopped momentarily by the door while the stable boy slipped out for Trevoris' mount. Peale saw Priam Lafferty glowering blackly at the captain who had usurped the interest of the tavern keeper's daughter. Trevoris stood with his greatcoat covering him and even through the swirling smoke Peale could see his eyes sweep the room. Then the door opened and the stable boy beckoned. The two went out and a heavy draught of air set all the lights to guttering. Certainly, decided Peale, the storm had not abated. It took an urgent kind of business to force a merchant to brave five miles of mud road on a pitch-black night. He settled in the chair and was grateful for the warmth.

Outside, Trevoris dismissed the boy and sprang into the saddle. Priam Lafferty put a hand to a stirrup and together the pair moved a few rods down the obscure highway.

"Ticklish business this," he grumbled. "I can't say it's the best way of meetin'."

Trevoris spoke coldly, through the dark.

"'Tis my policy to meet in as public place as possible. There's more spying ears and eyes in this road than back at the tavern. Rest easy."

"Easy!" grumbled Lafferty, almost shouting to make himself heard above the storm. "Little ye know my temper. This shilly-shally ill suits me. Don't be surprized if I see you in the city before so very long."

"You can do us better service where you are," replied Trevoris.

"And expose myself to more danger. 'Tis an uneasy life. Well, you've got the packet. Avoid the next village as you would the plague. 'Tis full of suspicious fellows."

"Au revoir. Should you find anything important in the next two weeks, remember to warn our certain friend."

With that Lafferty released his grip on the saddle and stopped, listening to the slosh of Trevoris' horse's hoofs until the tempo of the wind overwhelmed the small echoes. He traveled back to the tavern and on the threshold debated going in.

"No, 'tis best I leave Jeff and his questions alone. —— the fellow for his curiosity." He gripped the folds of his cloak tightly and, leaning against the wind, entered the picket lines of the camp.

JEFFRY PEALE had drunk his gentleman's quart and was overhearing the hot debate of a Massachusetts and a Virginia man on slavery when a finger tapped him on the arm. General Maxwell's aide, bearing the marks of the storm, spoke briefly.

"To headquarters with me, Jeffry. And you'd do well to tuck a bottle of rum under your arm."

Peale stood up suddenly.

"'Quarters?" said he, excitement coming over him.

He wrapped the cloak around him and clapped on his hat, striding to the door at a gait that left the aide well to the rear. Somewhere in the half-gale the officer caught up, complaining bitterly.

"Such an infernal racket abroad. I've not been warm for forty hours. D'ye have an inkling of your job?"

"Something," said Peale, picking a course for the brigadier's hut. They passed the pickets and slipped heavily in the mud.

"And yet you hurry," said the aide. He swore again. "Did anything ever beat a soldier's idea of glory? Rushing through this tempest to be sent on a wretchedly cold and hungry affair. Was there ever such a perversion—" he ran out of breath and had to stop. But at the brigadier's door he burst out, "Nevertheless, I'd give my right arm to be in your place, you lucky devil! Go in!"

General Maxwell was busy with the quill when Jeffry Peale entered, slamming the door behind him. The brigadier looked up, stared a moment with his bold, frank eyes and then motioned to another chair.

"Draw to the table. You've got business to do. Come here where you can see the map."

They were closeted thus, head to head, for the better part of a half-hour. In the end Peale said—

"Yes, sir, and where will I find the horse?"

"'Twill be at the door of your hut when you are ready. I give you but a few minutes. 'Tis late now and prudence demands you reach the river by day. Mind you, this is not an affair to be spread amongst your cronies."

Peale let himself out of the hut and trudged across the parade ground to his own quarters. The trees groaned beneath the impact of the wind's frenzy; all the world seemed a-quiver. In this black, uneasy universe there was nothing to distinguish between earth and infinity, yet Peale thought he saw a lone star breaking through the pall—his own star. It was an illusion, of course, he decided. Such was the fabric on which life was built. It took but a word and a gesture to change the course of a career, to lift a man from plodding obscurity to the blood-stirring path of adventure which now lay before him.

No more the student for Jeffry Peale. Now the clash of saber, the night ride and the softly spoken password. This was all that a soldier could ask. He plunged into his hut and went to his own corner, oblivious of the presence of Priam Lafferty in the opposite bunk. He belted on his sword, inspected his pistols and threw over his shoulder a cartridge pouch, ranging impatiently around the room.

Lafferty sat up and spoke sullenly.

"Patrol?"

Peale shook his head.

"Off on a private excursion."

"What, man? On a night like this? Tut, ye're out on duty or y'd not be out at all. I smell a mission. Where away, Jeff?"

"If you can smell the mission," returned Peale, grinning, "try to smell the destination."

Lafferty got up with an oath, his jowls turned scarlet.

"So I'm told to mind my own affairs, eh? What fine gentleman are you turnin' into? You aspire high, but let me not have airs from you. I'll not stand them."

It was Lafferty in his ugly mood, brow furrowed and lips twisted in a line at once sardonic and contemptuous. Peale squared off, speaking shortly.

"If you mean to rag me, it's best to forget it. A secret once told is a secret twice told and none should know it as well as you. Drop your bad humor and bid me luck. Be a good wife, Priam, to my property while I'm away."

The door rattled under a fist and Peale put a hand to the latch. Lafferty cursed.

"Mind your own property—I'll not! If you see me again—"

The rest of the phrase was snatched from his mouth when Peale opened the door and the wind burst through. A lantern glinted, an orderly held out the reins of a mount. Peale got into the saddle and swung away. He passed the pickets, the tavern and embarked on that road which Trevoris not long before had chosen.

He traveled fast and he traveled far, with always the elements shrilling in his ears and the rain soaking him to the skin. Past one sleeping village and another; across a creek, with the board bridge rumbling beneath him; up hill and down and at intervals a beacon-light shining across meadows to reassure him.

He forded the Passaic at flood, turned out at the hint of a night party scurrying down the black highway, crossed the treacherous slough of the Hackensack, and at last came upon a broad pike that led straight east. And just as day was breaking on the horizon he stopped his jaded horse at a silent house and knocked on the door. Long after, the bolt was shot and a voice challenged him.

"Well?"

"Franklin and Deane."

"Come in."

CHAPTER II

OVER THE RIVER

HE FOLLOWED shuffling footsteps down an interminably long hall, with the smell of stale furnishings in his nostrils and his drums cracking from the surcease of the storm. He could hear it battering furiously at every shutter and door as if trying to break through the habitation and surround him again with its ice-like fingers. Relieved from that frigid embrace he began to feel uncomfortably warm; his ears and fingers burned and his eyes stung. His guide turned a corner and opened a door, leaving him poised in the darkness with an admonitory whisper.

"Wait till I throw a blanket over the win'ow. Pryin' eyes—"

The fellow moved away, shuffling. Boards creaked and something fluttered; another door opened and presently the man returned with a guttering candle and set it on a table.

"I wish ye hadna come," he growled. "Aye, I wish it infernally strong ye hadna come. The countryside is a nest o' traitorous dogs that 'ud sell a neighbor to the gallows fer a shillin'."

By the feeble beam of light Peale saw him to be a thin, undersized man with a narrow face and a crooked nose, dressed like some slovenly servant. Furtive eyes met him and glanced away as if afraid of the contact.

" 'Tis beyant me why I'm served up with so many night birds. Three in the last month. Too many, too many. I'm suspected now. Lud, I c'n feel the halter on my neck every blessed hour. I suppose," he said, averting his face, "ye'll be wantin' to cross ower?"

"That's the idea," replied Peale, settling into a chair. "Day's about come, though, so I'll have to lay by until night. Y've got a plain citizen's suit for me—and a cot I can catch a bit of sleep on?"

The man wrung his bony fingers.

"So I've got to harbor ye in the house twelve hours? ——, why didna ye come sooner? I could've put ye across an' washed my hands of ye. 'Tis bad—bad. D'ye unnerstand? There was a file of redjackets in the neighborhood this very mornin'!"

" 'Tis a risk we must run," returned Peale wearily.

"Ye mean a risk *I* run, young man." The fellow stared gloomily at the table. "Well, ye're hankerin' fer a bit o' somethin' to eat, I'll vow."

"I could manage it."

" 'Twon't be much. Sit still."

The man rose and slipped through the door. In another part of the house Peale heard him throwing wood on the fire. He leaned back in his chair, on the point of falling asleep. By and by the man called softly through the hall.

"Asa, Asa, come down an' take a horse to the barn. Hurry now, there's a crack o' light comin' ower the eastern line. Ye'll bury saddle an' bridle beneath the hay."

Peale shook his head, feeling sorry for these people. They lived a life of extreme uncertainty, never sure but that the British might not pack them off for summary punishment or, on the other hand, that overzealous patriots, enraged by their apparent Toryism, would harry them out of house and home. It was not so much the actual danger, great though that was, but the suspense hanging over them. The furtive, suspicious look on the man's face was plain enough evidence of the strain. Peale opened his eyes suddenly, hearing a voice at his side.

"'Tis scant fare, friend, but the tea's hot an' plentiful. I keep the fireplace burnin' all the night fer visits like this. Say yer grace an' eat."

Peale fell to without ceremony. A pot of cheese, sour bread and bitter tea made his meal, with his host brooding over him.

"Ye'll take my bed. 'Tis time I was up. In my closet is a fine suit with a fawnskin waistcoat fit for any gentleman. I save it fer such occasions. Ye'll wear that well, though I doubt not it'll be a mite strict on yer shoulders. They shouldna send men with such unusual carriage on a mission, for when a man commands attention he's cramped in his business."

"There's a tavern somewhere across the stream?"

"A place fer every villain in the county—a scant mile above the English picket lines. The Red Boar, they call it. Aye, a precious pack of scoundrels infest it. It's direct across the river from me, beyant the shore a quarter mile, on the Albany Post Road."

Peale reached into his pocket and brought out five gold pieces which he shoved across the table without explanation. His host took them each between his fingers, rubbing the surface in a half-greedy manner.

"Well, 'tis some consolation. Now, come. Ye'd better sleep while ye may. At dark tonight we'll row across. My boat's floatin' on the tide in bushes at foot o' the cliff."

Peale followed the man through the hall and into a frowsy bedroom. He was tremendously tired and promptly sat on the mattress and shed his boots. His host muttered something about "pryin' eyes" again and snuffed out the candle, retreating. There was a gray light slipping through the shutters as Peale drew the blankets over him. Next moment he was profoundly asleep.

SOMEWHERE during the afternoon Peale woke from his heavy sleep. The storm seemed to have lost its vigor and now only shook the house with occasional gusts. Daylight penetrated the shutters, and he rolled over, knowing that it would do no good to rise before dusk and that an extra hour's rest would give him that much more power of body for whatever befell during the coming night. So he slept again.

When he woke the second time it was with a vague feeling of apprehension. There was no one in the semi-dark room and no sound in the cold house. Outside, evening was settling and the storm had subsided, leaving a silence over the countryside that seemed to Peale to contain a threat. Under the propulsion of this inexplicable feeling he got up, pulled on his boots and gained the malodorous hallway.

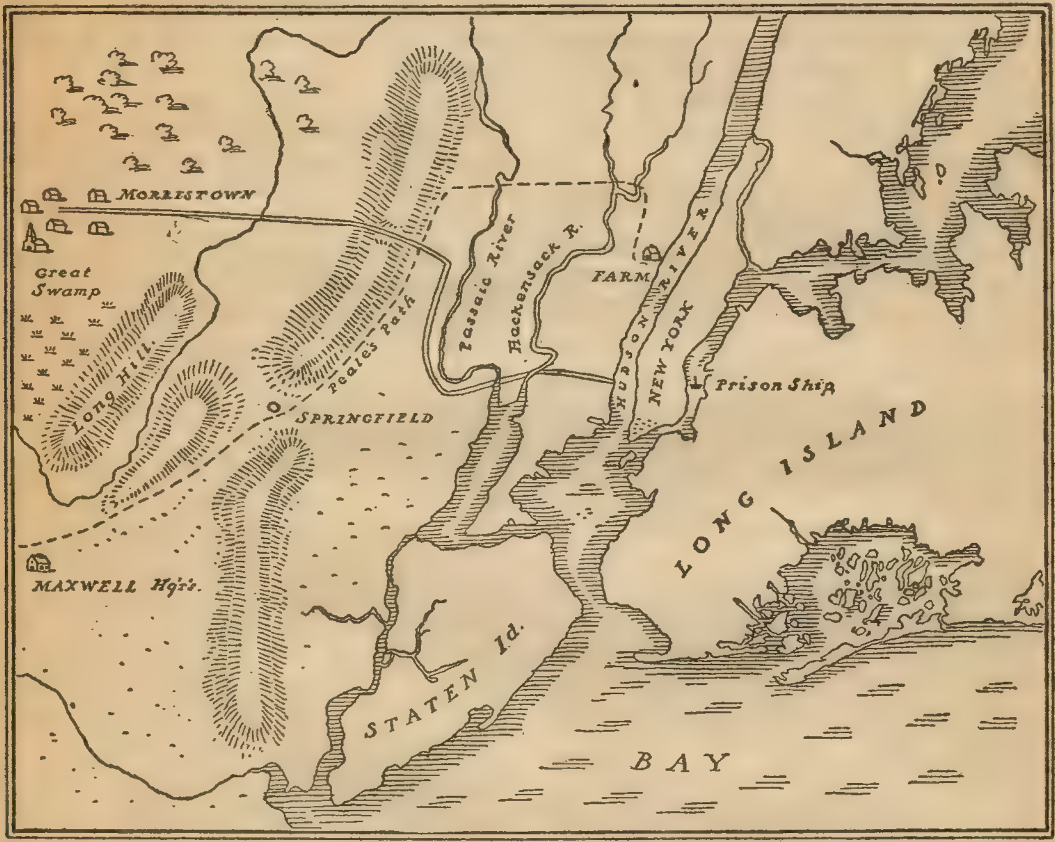
Across the way was the kitchen with a fire burning brightly on the stones and something of savory smell steaming in a kettle on the crane. But of his host, nothing could be seen or heard. He moved through the kitchen to another room, and thence to the funereal parlor he had first sat in, before dawn. Going back to the hall, he came to the stairway and called, softly—

"What's up, friend?"

The hollow echo of his voice trembled in the air and evoked no reply. Now, thoroughly roused, he started for the front door and was on the point of opening it and going out to the barn when a sense of caution stayed his hand. Instead, he turned to the nearest window and peered through the curtains.

It was the last of a gray, bleak day, but there was enough of light for Peale to see through a lane of trees to the dull black surface of the North River. Beyond, masked in the settling fog, was Manhattan Isle. Peale's sharply scanning eyes made out a dim beam of light from the farther shore—some farmer's lantern, no doubt, bobbing across a meadow. Farther down the Isle and shut from his view by the intervening trees was New York town, headquarters of the British forces in America—his destination.

A dog barked, shattering the unnatural stillness of the darkening night and Peale turned his attention to the immediate foreground. At the extreme right of his vision was the barn, and around its edges wound a path that he judged must lead down the bluff to the river's edge. Then he caught sight of a figure moving out of the trees, so slowly as to seem prompted by stealth. As long as he was in the deeper shadows, Peale could make nothing of his countenance or costume, but within a dozen strides the man got to clear ground and then the young officer had a vague outline of British accouterments and a trailing musket. Almost at the same instant he saw others breaking from the thicket at the other extremity of his vision.



He left his vantage point and ran to the door, shooting the bolt into the catch. Retreating to the bedroom, he swept his arm through the closet and brought out a handful of clothes from which he had to choose his suit almost by sense of touch. Ripping off his uniform he donned the civilian garments. Beneath his coat he buckled securely the brace of pistols.

Clapping on hat and cloak, he rolled up his own uniform, thrust it under the bed and hurried back to the window. In the fast-thickening fog the four or five advancing Englishmen were hardly more than silhouettes against the darker mass of woods. Even as he turned a last glance at them, some one mounted the flagstone steps and resolutely knocked at the door, saying in a bold, ringing voice—

"Open, farmer, 'tis king's soldiers."

Peale ran back through the hall on his toes. A rear door promised exit somewhere in the darkness, but it seemed to him probable that it might be guarded. He swayed on his toes, debating courses, while the front portal shivered under the butt of a gun and the challenging voice rose to a more irate pitch.

"Open or I'll break this cursed thing from its hinges!"

At that Peale made up his mind. Drawing pistol, he raised the latch of the rear door very cautiously and then flung it open at one sudden, unexpected movement. A figure twisted around to meet him, growling:

"Oh, no ye don't! Stand fast or I'll stick ye somethin' 'orrible!"

His pistol went in a true arc and struck the sentry on the head; the man fell with a small, expiring breath, sloshing in the muddy earth. Peale looked about him, half expecting other opposition. None developed. He ran behind a stone house, passed another intervening stretch to a shed and thence across twenty yards to the thicket.

It had all been accomplished without commotion or general discovery. But he could hear the man at the front door groaning and knew it would be but a moment before the unconscious sentry would be discovered. He turned riverward and, parting the sodden brush before him, skirted the house and barn. Scrambling down a rather sharp slope, he reached a path that descended still more abruptly over the face of a rock palisade. As he lowered himself, loose rocks shot away from his feet, crashed through brush and reached the river's surface with a plunking sound.

Here in the gorge a small wintry wind scoured upward and numbed his exposed members. He groped along the dark stairs with all the speed possible, leaving the sound of the British soldiery behind and at last putting his feet on level ground. Before him water rippled against the stony beach and bushes rustled lightly in the breeze.

The farmer had mentioned his boat tied to bushes, and Peale, on exploring forward, found it so.

"Oars, bailing pot and rope," said he, untying the skiff and shoving off. "Having been so unceremoniously left, I shall have to be my own guide. 'Tis the gentleman's own loss that he's not here to bring his boat back from the other shore. I strongly suspect he deserted the house at the very first smell of a trap and left me to meet the amiable hirelings of Hanover. Ah, well, I should not too strongly condemn the poor devil. Now let's try our luck."

It seemed no great matter to keep abreast the current and land on the opposite shore somewhere in the latitude of the tavern. He pulled steadily, muffling his stroke as much as possible; water gurgled gently against the skiff's snout. From the river he looked upward along the Jersey Palisades, trying to distinguish his recent shelter, but that area was swathed in the same darkness that fell about the river.

In midstream or beyond—he had no way of knowing just where—he heard the knock of oars and the boiling of water. He rested, trying to fathom the whereabouts of the other craft. Of a sudden it slid within pistol's range, so near that he could hear a man's heavy breathing. Some one spoke with a gibing inflection:

"Wot did ye say 'er name was? Amaryllis, hey? Aye, I know the trull. Lad, ye didn't think to be the only man—"

The sentence was muffled by the fog; the boat passed beyond a heavy wall of it and Peale heard only a heavy coughing and a rough expletive. Then silence.

He took up his course again and redoubled his efforts to regain lost headway in the stream. Ten minutes later the bottom of the boat grated on gravel and stopped. He climbed out and, as a precaution, shoved the craft again into the stream. The farmer was out one stout skiff; that was the fortune of war.

"Now if I've held with the current, I should be in a straight line with that tavern," he murmured.

He moved forward, crossing a rocky strip of beach and coming against a line of bushes. A bank appeared to hedge him from the rolling land of the island. It was useless to seek a path in the darkness, so he worked himself between the thicket and climbed straight forward. It was stout labor, but presently he left the slope behind him and stood erect on the edge of some kind of field. For the first time he saw lights glimmering dimly in the southward—lights of New York town.

"Straight eastward, my lad," he cautioned himself. "The road should be hard by."

A creek splashed along its course on his left, and against the metal-black sky he saw the faint tracery of tree branches. Passing onward, he arrived at a fence, surmounted it and became engaged in heavy woods. At almost the same time he heard, from the immediate foreground, the creaking of a carriage and the urging of a driver's voice. This was the reassurance he needed.

Stumbling from one abrupt depression to another, he fought his way from the trees, well soaked, and embarked upon the highway, sinking deep in the mud. It was villainous stuff that laid a score of traps for him, yet within a hundred yards he was rewarded by the sight of a dim, diffused light ahead.

It was a feeble beacon, nor did it become much brighter as he progressed. When he stood within a few yards of the place he found a smudged window winking at him; from within the place came a bawling voice. It was a tavern, and undoubtedly that unsavory hostelry known as the Red Boar. Peale stood a moment at the door, listing to the groan of the tavern shingle in the fitful wind. Then, drawing a pistol, he pushed through the door with the abrupt haste of a man seeking trouble.

It was an evil-smelling place, with furniture scarred by many brawls and the floor littered with straw. A dozen candles gave it but half enough light and a fire smoked dismally on the hearth. In the far corner were two men who had kicked back their chairs at his entrance and looked about to fall upon him. In all his travels he had never entered an inn more charged with the atmosphere of illicit trade and violence. He had no doubt that it was the rendezvous of every renegade in the countryside and, since it was so close to the British pickets, that scores of deserters had made it their stopping place. He waved the weapon at the two glowering fellows and spoke crisply.

"Sit down, you rascals and stop that infernal staring at a gentleman. Where's the master of this inn?"

Hardly had he finished the question when an inner door flew open and a tremendously fat creature with a perspiring brow entered.

"Eh, eh?" he grumbled, "that be no way to talk to my customers, sir. 'Tis an honest trade I have."

"Honest?" cried Peale angrily. "—— of an honest place! Not a quarter-mile back I was set upon by a brace of ruffians and lost a sound horse and saddlebags! I had the voice of one and, by Godfrey, if I hear him again I'll know him well enough to send a ball through his cowardly body! You—" pointing to the nearest of the men at the table, "—speak a word! Let's have your voice."

"D'ye take me fer—"

"Enough," broke in Peale. "Now your partner!"

"I'm minded to break yer face, my fine—"

The inn keeper clapped his hands together.

"No, no, Job! Hold yer tongue! The gentleman's well roused and apt to do violence. Sir, ye've come to the wrong place, I do swear. D'ye think I'd harbor birds of that feather?"

"I have your reputation," said Peale somberly. "'Tis none too savory. A pity to me the general doesn't sweep this island clean o' such rascals. Dash me, I'll take it out on some one for that miserable half-mile I walked!"

"'Tis but a like distance to the pickets," assured the inn keeper in a soothing voice.

"An' d'ye think I'd go another step in this mud on foot? I've got a better way. Tell me, d'ye know any of those pickets?"

"I know half the royal army," boasted the tavern keeper. "They favor me with their trade—when a little innocent fun is wanted."

"You'll make a fine guide. Bring around a couple horses and guide me through the lines."

"Oh, no, sirrah," objected the tavern keeper. "A gentleman couldn't ask that much. Perhaps one of these boys—"

"Cursed if I want either of the rascals!" broke in Peale, blowing through his nose. "I want a man to explain my lookin' like a cursed rebel spy! Ye'll go if I've got to drag you by the queue. Come, don't purse your lips at me. If it's a sweetener ye want—here."

He took a crown from his pocket and tossed it at the fat one's outstretched hand. The latter caught it with astonishing agility and a change came over his face. The two at the table exchanged a significant glance, which Peale observed.

"If ye've thought to waylay me, ye'll do well to think of safer robbery. I'm not a man to tamper with. Come, Benedick, get your horses out, and bring a lantern. I dislike waiting."

The tavern keeper bowed.

"If the gentleman puts it that way, I'm bound to give. A moment, sir, while I saddle up. Ye'll have a drink?"

"Y've made your profit off me," said Peale. "Now go along. I don't drink such bilge-water as ye'd likely serve."

The tavern keeper took the insolence without protest. He had dealt with many great gentlemen with tongues just as sharp as this one owned. In particular, he had been favored with the company of some of the British officers when they were sweeping the island for deserters, and he knew the quality of their scorn only too well. So he ducked his head and left the room, while Peale stood wrathfully in the center of the place, eyeing the two at the table.

They remained silent, cowed by his steady gaze. In a short while the tavern keeper hallooed from the road, and Peale went out to find the man in the saddle, holding a spare horse by the reins and carrying a lantern. Peale swung up; they pressed forward.

"I hope ye won't be sayin' too much about the rascals that set upon you," offered the tavern keeper humbly. "At least 'twould be kind if ye didn't say it was close to my place. The high gentleman officers in town look queerly my way. Any excuse would be good enough for them to harry me out. Oh, I'll not say I don't treat the boys well and mebbe there's a bit of mischief that goes on. But ye'll allow it would be injustice in this case."

"It's a —— outrage that a gentleman can't travel from Philip's Manor to New York without being took by a pack o' brigands," growled Peale.

Whereupon the tavern keeper fell silent.

The scattered lights of the city grew closer and the road turned to another quarter. Quite before Peale was aware of it they were being challenged, and the tavern keeper had slipped from his saddle and was advancing, lantern swinging from side to side. Peale heard him speaking in a low, amiable tone.

"—a misfortune to the gentleman. 'Tis you, Rob? Gad, that's luck! Ye'll pass him out o' favor? Should he be kept till daylight I fear he'd tell the general. Then I'd suffer. A matter o' favor."

The guard muttered a half inaudible phrase.

" 'Tis after enterin' hours. But let him come on. It's a raw, cold night, ye old rascal."

By the light, Peale saw a bottle pass. The innkeeper returned, chuckling.

"Go right on, sir. About the horse, now—"

"Come with me till we strike the cobblestones," said Peale, "and you shall have your horse back."

Thus they passed through and were enveloped in momentary darkness. Without further conversation they traveled until the houses began to scatter along the way, some dark and some with lights a-twinkle in their windows. In another twenty minutes they reached a street lamp and here Peale drew up and dropped from the saddle.

"Y're an amiable villain," he said, handing over the reins. "I shall say nothing about the affair."

"Thanks to ye, sir. 'Tis not every gentleman— There's a patrol, by ——! I'd best be goin'."

He turned and made off, leaving Peale in the street. Somewhere in another block came the steady tread of feet. In the silence of this outer section Peale heard a brief command and then the challenging of guards. Without listening further, he swung down an alley and passed from the radius of the light.

"So far luck has run strong with me," he murmured, "but, when it comes time to leave—ah, that may be another story."

He had been well coached as to his destination, and within another ten minutes he stood at the door of an imposing stone house through the windows of which came a cheerful light. He tapped on the knocker, and by the glow emanating from the interior began to survey his muddy boots and soaked apparel. The door opened suddenly and a girl with corn-colored hair and a grave white face stood silhouetted by the rays of a hall light. She spoke with a slow, rising inflection—

"Yes?"

"I have been told, madam," said he, after a sharp inspection of her face, "that I might find lodging here. I've traveled a great distance this day and had the misfortune to lose my horse."

She was silent for a long interval, the wind blowing the folds of a voluminous skirt about her. One hand rose toward her face as if to fend off a stray lock of hair.

"I'm sorry, but the house is full," she replied at last.

"The river is deep," said he, making a gesture with his arm.

"Ah! Come in."

CHAPTER III

A CAPTAIN OF THE KING'S OWN

SUNLIGHT invaded the room—the vagrant sunlight of a wintry, overcast day. Some time ago the fifes and drums had sounded reveille throughout the town; but it was a summons that had not found Jeffry Peale lagging in bed. Quite a long while before he had been stationed at the clothes closet with his ear pressed against the wall. In the room adjoining, two officers had spent their dressing period in a rather acrimonious argument concerning military policy, during the course of which Peale had picked up a few helpful fragments relating to conditions within the city. And after their departure for breakfast he set thoughtfully to work brushing his clothes and knocking the caked mud from his shoes.

It was while doing this that there sounded a tapping on his door. Adjusting his coat and moving a little nearer to the pistols on the lowboy, he said, "Come," and then was sorry for his aloofness. The portal opened quickly and the girl with the corn-colored hair slipped through with one swift glance behind her.

"It was the very first moment I could get away," said she. "The last of the gentlemen just now left the table."

"I had thought to come down earlier," he answered, "but decided it wisdom to wait until I saw you." He smiled, becoming on the instant a fine and engaging gentleman. "'Tis not my custom, I assure you—to let others wait on me."

There was no answering smile.

"You had not meant to mix with the English officers?" she asked. "I thought you were to remain under cover, like the rest, until I had given you information."

"My orders are a little broader. I am to take what you have for me and spend the day walking about."

She seemed to be looking through and beyond him, her eyes troubled by visions. Jeffry Peale thought he had never seen a woman so soberly introspective and yet so plainly made for gaiety and high humor. Once, the sun thrust a long beam across the room to become entangled in her hair, and under that light it glowed like metal at white heat, sending color to her face.

"Why," she demanded, "are you all so gay and reckless—all you who come on these dangerous missions? Is it because you love danger more than others—or is it a mask?"

"All men love life," said he, "and certainly none love it more than I. I think we like to play a game. The game is to flirt as near death as possible and yet come away with honor. In my imaginings I have done it many times in many ways."

"But when you flirt—and lose? When you see death as surely yours—then what?"

"'Tis in the game not to consider losing. But if we do lose, then it's to be played out and the forfeit given. What else?"

"Like Captain Hale," said she, nodding. "Sometimes I see them—all that have passed through here—standing in a rank. They were brave and gallant fellows. And in the ranks there's sometimes a gap, and then my heart aches terribly all night."

"Look to yourself. Do you never think of your own danger?"

"Danger? There is none. Look: My boarding house is always full of British officers. Some are very loyal—and—and complimentary. The first one to whisper treason about me would have a duel on his hands instantly. I am utterly safe. But come, is it not foolish to spend good time this way? I brought with me a list kept for two weeks now. It is yours. You had better memorize the figures and destroy it."

A slip of paper came from some mysterious source. Peale took it, bowing slightly.

"I should be flattered to know your name," he said. "Mine is Jeffry Peale, of Maxwell's brigade."

"Jane Welch. When will you have breakfast?"

"Give me a half hour with this," he replied, pointing to the paper. "I should like to get it in mind before going abroad."

She inclined her head and left the room. Peale took a chair by the window and began a studious perusal of the finely shaded writing. For a while he saw nothing of the figures or words. Jane Welch's face was indelibly outlined on the paper, somber-eyed, the sun shining in golden yellow hair.

"'Tis like looking at the sun and seeing the reflection long after," he mused.

He found himself comparing the courage in her eyes with the same quality he had seen in those officer ladies who followed the army from campaign to campaign, creating makeshift homes in tents or huts, that the men might have some moments of homely cheer. Women like Dame Washington, Greene's charming wife or the jolly Mrs. Knox.

He turned resolutely to the list of regiments in and around the city, memorizing. Interspersed among the figures were items overheard, such as:

"The Fourth Foot is well talked of by officers for discipline, but the men are considered undersized and the regiment only half strength."

"'Tis known that Admiral Howe wishes to see the Colonies conciliated and that his brother, the general, has a great regard for American rifles."

"Cornwallis is considered the strongest fighting general of all the English."

He went through the paper carefully, and then a second time, laying it aside with a comment.

"This evening I shall commit it more carefully. 'Tis time now to take my tour."

Slipping the paper beneath the mattress, he finished dressing, took his cloak and hat and went down. In the hall the girl met him and pointed through an inner door to where a table still was set with breakfast dishes.

"Take the head chair. Probably you will have company. There's an officer or two who usually sleep right up to parade and roll-call and have to come back later to eat. What," she asked, in a much lower tone, "shall I name you?"

"My own," said he. "The less of deception, the less of stumbling."

"But a moment ago," she remarked, "I remembered I had not yet eaten. So if you do not mind—"

He was before her, pulling back a chair.

"Many strange things befall a man in the course of war, but I should not have believed yesterday that in twenty hours I would be tipping coffee cups with so pleasant a partner. 'Twill brighten the camp-fire many days to come."

She gave him a glance that for the moment was free from the usual soberness. It left her face strangely soft and, in a measure, beautiful.

"I do believe war makes all men gallant."

He took his seat, saying gravely:

"No doubt you hear many pretty speeches. I did not mean it to sound so."

"I did not take it—so," she replied and turned her eyes to the silver pot. "Your cup, Jeffry Peale."

The front door opened and slammed violently. A youth in a subaltern's uniform came bouncing in.

"By all that's sublime, Miss Jane—" he began in a loud voice, then stopped short and put on his professional dignity. "Oh, I do beg pardon for the racket. Silly of me."

"Lieutenant Consolven," said the girl with a slow gesture of her white hand, "we have a temporary guest at our table. This is Jeffry Peale."

The Englishman bowed with his head and shoulders as Peale rose.

"Pleasure," he grunted and without further ceremony made for a seat across from the girl. He had a high color and a long, horsey jaw; there was about him the external boisterousness and rudeness of the country squire's son. When he sat down it was with vigor and when he began to eat it was with enthusiasm.

"Hungry—lud! Made that parade one leap ahead of the old martinet. No more!" He swallowed a quantity of cakes and coffee and turned a frank, unsuppressed curiosity on Peale. "Peale? A Surrey Peale?"

"Kent, a hundred years ago. At present a New York Peale, and an infernally roused one. Why d'ye allow brigands to invest the roads around this city? I was set upon last night and in the scuffle lost a good horse and saddlebags. Seems a pity this army can't suppress such nonsense."

The subaltern threw back his head and laughed noisily.

"Sounds to be the very same tale the 'martinet' tells, doesn't it, Miss Jane?"

The girl explained to Peale.

"That's Lieutenant Consolven's captain—a very strict gentleman."

"A ripper! A fire-eatin', gimlet-eyed monster with the heart of a provost marshal," broke in the subaltern, mouth full.

"—and he's forever outraged by the lawlessness outside the lines," she finished.

"Must run," said the subaltern, swallowing his coffee. "Infernal racket abroad. Would appear there's a certain rebel spy in the city. So the report comes from headquarters. Now they've got details scourin' every low dive in town. Cursed life, this. Always some overturnin' or uproar."

"And do they know the gentleman by sight or substance?" asked Peale.

"Not that I'm aware. 'Tis just a smell they have. Troop across the river flushed him from a suspect's house. Found a uniform. Now we're turnin' out the low dives. If he's about we'll find him there. Always find spies in such filthy dens," he explained with finality, kicking back his chair.

Peale rose at the same time.

"If you've no objection I'll walk down the street with you."

"Come along then."

Peale followed the subaltern out, meeting the girl's sober glance as he closed the door. There was a deep concern in those eyes and, though he wanted to believe that concern was for his safety, he was too humble to suppose it so. Rather it was for the success of his mission and for the cause he represented. So thinking, he passed into the windy street, with the sun showing fitfully, half up in the heavens and toward the south the black clouds of a coming storm.

He had to walk lively to keep up with the Englishman who muttered a fear of the Martinet.

"A sly devil," said he. "I'm supposed to be on tour now—worse luck. The man's eyes are in the back o' his neck, I fully believe. By gad, 'tis a sad state when the son of a Surrey gentleman must fetch and carry to a Lunnon weaver rose from the ranks. This principle of equality of classes—was there ever a more pernicious, damnable doctrine?"

"Many men hold with it," observed Peale gravely.

"'Twill be the ruination of all such," grumbled the subaltern. "Let each bottle keep to its own shelf."

His eyes darted down the street and suddenly, without apology, he bolted into an alley, leaving his companion alone.

Peale continued his walk, keenly observant. It had been some years since he last had trod these streets, and the change of the town was shockingly visible. It had the air of being down at the heels, of sadly needing paint and repairs. The streets were littered with débris and, though by reputation it bore the name of a city very gay and voluptuous under the British régime, Peale could not but notice the shabbiness of the passers-by and the air of uncertainty in too many faces. Here were concentrated thousands of troops and refugees, a great part of the latter living only on the hope of a speedy success of the royal arms, subsisting on the last of their incomes.

Fine ladies and gentlemen passed him in coaches, holding their heads properly high; tradesmen peeped from their doors at this parade, none too cheerful, and here and there lounged rough characters who viewed all with insolence. British occupancy had brought untidiness to an orderly provincial town. And always there was a passing and repassing of soldiers led by stony-faced officers.

It was upon these that Peale bent the closest scrutiny, sometimes with professional admiration, sometimes with ill-concealed scorn. The British Empire could buy them fine uniforms and new accoutrements and drill them until they stepped as one and carried their arms neatly; even so, the home government could not conceal the poverty of the recent regiments.

The veterans Peale could tell at a glance by their carriage—men who had been trained in the hard school of lifetime enlistments. Peale had met them on the battlefield and could testify to their stubbornness under fire; but at intervals he saw groups from the new, high-numbered regiments—undersized, shoddy men from the docks and gutters of England. The very sight of them gave him courage, and he turned toward the North River slips, where the spars showed high above the houses, with a lightened heart. The Elijahs and Elnathans and Samuels who stood parade on the bleak Morristown hills need have nothing to fear from them.

He came to the lowlier part of town, where were lodging houses for sailors and barracks for soldiers—a quarter smelling of salt air and tar, and traditionally boisterous. Beside him was an apothecary shop and on impulse he ducked through the small door and stood in a semi-lighted cell, hearing some one growl at him from a dark corner.

"Well, what d'ye want here?"

"A shilling's worth of horehound," answered Peale, making out the shadow of the fellow, "and a little civility, my friend."

"If y've come from gin'rals headquarters to spy on an honest man's business, *gentleman*, ye can go back. Wirra, 'tis a poor excuse ye offer—a shillin's of horehound, eh? Bah!"

"You talk, friend, strangely like a rebel. Doesn't his Majesty's gracious government suit you?"

The apothecary moved reluctantly to his shelves.

"I'll have me rights," he grumbled. "D'ye think it's politic to be sendin' agents forever around to snoop? Y'd think th' blessed army was afeerd o' its shadow. Day an' night—day an' night! Between rogues and thieves an' spies I'm fair sick o' it!"

Here was a malcontent, certainly. Peale threw his shilling on the case and waited for the apothecary.

"Some day, friend, you may be rid of the trouble," said he, and took up the horehound.

The cobblestones resounded with those incessant files marching by. He bent beneath the door's shortness and faced the daylight again. And immediately every muscle and every nerve in his body sprang to that defensive state which rises in great danger.

For, advancing upon him, not a rod distant, was that thin-lipped, severe-eyed gentleman whom he had met in Priam Lafferty's company at the Black Frigate tavern—Trevoris. He was no longer the merchant in civilian's black but a captain wearing the bright red, blue and buff of the King's own regiment.

He stopped, even as Peale stopped, and his hand went up to halt the dozen soldiers behind him. The severe eyes contracted and the rather swart face screwed into an unlovely, predatory mask. Thus he stood for an instant, studying the man before him with a terribly sharp gaze. Then his sword came flashing out and he moved forward, saying coolly:

"So, my dear Mr. Peale, you have favored us with a brief visit? Stand fast, sir, or I'll run you through!"

It was such an instant as Jeffry Peale had often visioned over his books. On those occasions past he was often troubled about his slowness of mind, for he never rated himself highly as a quick thinker; but now, as the grim, dour-faced captain advanced, blade foremost, and the soldiers and bystanders began to crowd around, he saw every avenue of escape in one swift glance; understanding, too, that if he were to live at all he had to put himself to the gauntlet.

He whirled, threw a man aside with his arm and dashed down the street, unhooking his cloak and letting it fall. There was an alley hard by that angled toward the river and this he took, with a motley pack pursuing in full cry and every house disgorging men at his heels. Not a hundred yards off he saw the black hull of a ship sidling in the water, and beside it a warehouse. It was for that he made his break; once inside that shelter, piled high with London merchandise, he might temporarily hide, and while the pursuers diffused themselves, drop silently into the river and start for the Jersey shore.

He calculated he would have made some progress across before they followed him in boats. After that, he depended on his strength to carry him safely over. At any rate, it was the lone means of escape open to him.

But, as the alley narrowed down, a slatternly woman stepped out of a near-by hovel and stood, arms akimbo, gaping at him. She was rolling in fat, frowsy-haired and seemingly dazed by the unexpected uproar. The voice of the pack, however, was something that stirred her animal shrewdness. A human being was being hunted down, the rarest of all sports. So, when Peale was but a few yards away she stepped directly into his path and spread out her immense arms, cackling.

"No ye don't laddie! Come here."

Peale, never expecting this turn of affairs, was unable to halt his course. He swerved a little, plunged into an outstretched arm. It threw him and he went down, with the slattern on top, clawing his cheeks with her nails. Then those fat arms gripped him relentlessly, and before he could fight away the mob was around, striking him with boot and cudgel, shouting their curses. Dimly, he heard the curt voice of the captain lashing at them as at a pack of dogs.

"Back, ye scurvy animals, before I send a volley into ye! Sergeant, knock 'em aside! I want that man alive for the gallows!"

The crowd gave way and Peale, rising to a knee, felt the captain's sword at his breast. The man's face was unmoved and he spoke with cold courtesy.

"I could wish that courage expended for a more worthy cause," said he. "Stand, Mr. Peale."

The game was played out. Peale rose and faced a file of redcoats.

"Your victory, Mr. Trevoris. Or was that a convenient title for your recent expedition?"

"My name, Mr. Peale, is Captain Tremble," said the officer. And he added, with a certain grim satisfaction, "My men call me the Martinet an' 'tis certain I shall be on the court martial that sentences ye to hang."

The slattern elbowed her way through the circle, shouting:

"An' here's the one who got the laddie, Cap'n! Ye'll not forget the reward, wull ye?"

The captain favored her with a most contemptuous glance and spoke to the soldiers; but there was yet another fellow to have his brief say. Some one bellowed like a bull and Peale, turning his eyes, saw the apothecary standing near, shaking his finger.

"So, 'twas a *rebel* spy, eh? An' ye guyed me about loyalty to the king? Wirra, I'll show'ee my measure!"

He ducked from sight and put a shoulder to the spectators in front. Before Peale could dodge, the apothecary's arms carried forward a bucket of slops and all the filthy contents splashed in the prisoner's face. The crowd yelled gleefully; Captain Tremble swung and his sword struck the apothecary on the head once, then again and again until the latter swayed and fell within the circle, a bloody spectacle.

"I'll teach ye respect of the king's arms!" he growled, blowing through his nose. "Y're no better than a rebel." Then, hearing the undertone of hostility to the act, he flashed his weapon around at them. "No more of it! Disperse! If any wish to taste Provost Cunningham's hospitality I'll soon enough clap him in the first sugar house on the street. Disperse now!"

The citizens fell back and made a lane, through which Peale marched, flanked by the captain and followed by the file of soldiers. From behind sounded the loud and sustained villification of the slattern. It accompanied them out of the alley and well up the street. Even as they turned a corner they could hear her voice rising and falling, expending all the well learned curses of a lurid life.

The captain was speaking, but to deaf ears. Peale had plunged himself into a stern inquiry, that sort of self-distrusting examination which had been his dower from earliest youth. There never was a time when he had not belittled his mind and his courage, and never so much as now. Another more resolutely forthright man would not have been taken. A more subtle man never would have fallen into the snare, never would have left a trail behind for British authorities to trace.

And yet, as he argued the other side of the case, he found himself cheered. For, after all, the moves of the game had been against him. It mattered not how shrewd his might have been—the sharp eyes of Trevoris, or Captain Tremble, had fallen athwart his path. That was a contingency he could not have foreseen, nor could any decently discreet mind have foreseen it. A fortune of war.

For one brief instant he experienced a stealthy fear that Priam Lafferty was involved; he immediately stamped this fear as a disloyalty on his part and banished it from his mind. Had he not known Priam the best part of his life? Priam had been duped, imposed upon by the pseudo-merchant from Spanish New Orleans. Nothing more.

And so, by the time they had traversed the street, a spectacle for all eyes, he had restored his self-respect and regained the philosophy that seemed to him to represent all that was best in a soldier's life—to resign oneself in mind to any fate that might befall, but in action never to give up so long as a single living impulse animated muscle and mind.

The detail stopped; he was pushed into a door by Tremble. At the end of a hall they turned into a room and confronted a seated general who wore an order on his coat. Captain Tremble explained the affair in a dozen words. Peale saw the general's face turn stormy.

"I can not understand it," said the general. "Blessed if I can! What more could you provincials wish than the beneficent kindness of his majesty? What real, just grievances have you that could not have been settled peacefully? 'Tis upon your head—all this blood-letting and misery. I have said a thousand times and I say it again, that to all disaffected who accept his majesty's gracious pardon should be shown every courtesy—as if they had never erred. But to you, my fine young man—to you who have broken every regard, violated the king's peace and gone so far as to engage in the abominable, insidious act of spying—to you I shall not show an ounce of mercy! There will be a court for you before night and by daybreak you shall die!"

"'Tis such a sermon as I might have expected," replied Peale sedately. "I do not expect you to see on both sides of the wall. But if you should wish to find me cringing for pardon, I must disappoint you. I can die as well as any man."

"Captain, send him to the provost!"

Peale bowed himself out and, followed by Tremble, rejoined the file of soldiers and set rapidly off down another street. The storm in the south had moved closer; shutters were slapping on the house walls and a gust of rain sprinkled the cobblestones. Peale drew a deep breath, unconscious of all the eyes upon him, and began to feel a strange exhilaration of spirit. The reason for it he could not determine, yet it was there, a strong, buoyant current that flowed out of some remote reservoir. And, prompted by it, he raised his head, to find himself looking directly at the house of Jane Welch and to see Jane Welch herself staring down from the stoop at him, her hair blowing heedlessly across her white face and her eyes mirroring an emotion Jeffry Peale had never before seen in a woman's face.

It was all too brief; one moment he met that glance and the next had passed on, seeing Captain Tremble bowing at the girl and hearing the guard behind gruffly ordering him to move faster.

Somewhere beyond they stopped at a sugar house. Tremble advanced toward the guard. There was a passage of words and another officer turned into sight, beginning an immediate protest.

"No, no, Captain. I can not permit another man in this place. 'Tis loaded so now there's not room for all to sleep. Another few treacherous dogs and they'll burst the walls. Try the next."

And so they went on, while the wind burst over the town with redoubled force. Peale, entirely disinterested, took little note of his surroundings. Presently they came to another sugar house, stopped and waited. Tremble motioned Peale inward. He passed on to a hall and thence into a semi-dark, dismally cold area, hearing a lock click behind him. Footsteps clattered away and presently he was left alone.

He had no idea how long he waited in this cheerless, draughty place; it seemed an endless length of time. He heard the guard changed and the occasional rattling of a cart. The day waned swiftly and of a sudden the storm roared in all fury about them. It was then that he heard the inner door open and was dazzled by the rays of a lantern. A thick booming voice challenged him:

"What the —— you doin' here? ——, there's rats like you scattered all over the town. How in —— do they expect the provost to keep account? Guard, who's this rebel?"

"I be'nt told, sir. The last relief said nawthink about 'im."

He was another officer, the lantern bearer, and slightly drunk. At a peremptory order Peale moved into the hall, to find guards resting on their arms. Propelled by a rough arm, he stepped into the rain-drenched street and was put into a column of prisoners who huddled miserably together. The lantern bearer coughed and said gruffly:

"Off to the prison ship, the whole pack

o' ye. 'There's a new set o' rascals comin' to the city an' we need room. Forward!"

Bending his head against the tempest, Peale followed obediently. They trudged from street to street and at last came to the river's edge, where a barge waited. One by one they were herded in. The guards crowded after and then, with a prisoner at each oar, they embarked across the twisted currents of the East River.

It could not have been more than four o'clock, but it was so dark that nothing could be seen twenty yards ahead of the pitching craft. The slightly drunken officer cursed them in a dozen ribald ways and once cuffed the ear of one of his own men who manipulated the sweep.

"Look, rebels!" he shouted. "There's your future home! Many've rotted there before you and many will rot after y've been sewed up and tossed over!"

Peale raised his head and gazed eastward. A phantom ship rose out of the fog and towered over the barge—a battered, stripped hulk that rode uneasily in the swells. Not a glimmer of light came from it, not a sound of cheer. It floated, a sinister, foul thing—the grave of all hope, a living death for thousands of American soldiers.

As the barge passed around the stern, Peale made out the faded name, *Whitby*. But on a thousand tongues it was already known as the "hell-ship."

CHAPTER IV

THE PRISON SHIP

THE barge, thrust by the current, sheered in toward the hull of this ship of death. Peale saw a port-hole, strongly barred, a few feet above his head and, as they came abreast, a vagary of the wind carried down to him an indescribable stench. Nor was he the only one to experience it, for there was a general mutter among the prisoners and the slightly drunk officer began to lash at them with his tongue.

"Pull out—pull out! Y'll swamp the barge shortly!"

From the port-hole issued a hollow, frenzied voice.

"Better drowned than sech mis'ry! Lads, for God's sake stay clear of this cesspool! 'Tis easier to die in clean air!"

The officer raged and drew his pistol, threatening instant death to the unknown speaker, but a sweep of the oars took the barge away and the darkness blotted out voice and stench alike. A dozen strokes brought them on the lee side of the ship; the officer issued a great shout that presently was answered by a sentry's grumbling voice.

"Aye."

"Throw over the ladder! Prisoners comin' up."

"'Tis after receivin' hours."

"Stand there, jackanapes, and refuse an officer's direct order! Throw over the ladder, or by gad, I'll give you a ball! After hours, indeed! Who are you to balk a provost guard? Make it fast now before we stave in our sides!"

After considerable delay in which the barge was flung violently back and forth, always threatening to hurl itself against the ship's side and splinter into a hundred pieces, the ladder rolled down upon them and the prisoners climbed up, one by one.

Peale, being in the rear of the barge, was the last to step on the decks of the hulk, with the uncomplimentary farewell of the English subaltern behind him. The rest of the unfortunates were huddled in front with the solitary guard hovering indistinctly three yards away. There still was time to take a step back and hurl himself over into the turbulent water; in the darkness none could find him nor trace his route shoreward. Precisely at that instant the guard advanced and a bayonet touched his chest.

"For'd, rebel and down into the hole!"

Other guards, warned, came running up. Peale went on, seeing those ahead stoop and disappear into the bowels of the hulk. Presently he was beside the trap-door that led below and, when he likewise bent over, the fetid, miasmatic air billowed up and struck him fully in the face.

It was a smell unlike any he had ever experienced. Barnyard and abattoir stenches were perfume compared to it. That first full breath threw him back, gagging, his vitals revolting at so horrible a destination. Then the guard's steel blade again touched him ungently and, half falling through the aperture, he grasped the rungs of the ladder and descended. The door of the trap fell into place, sealing this foulness in.

Reaching the bottom, he stood at the center of a whispering group, blinded by the utter darkness and wrestling with the revolt of his senses. It seemed impossible that men could live at all in such atmosphere, or that any authority would permit it. Yet it was so; here below was half a brigade of men—the *Whitby* had the reputation of holding better than a thousand—sleeping, or trying to sleep.

The group dissolved, fellows stumbling to right and left, seeking a place on the floor. Peale's ears began to pick up a subdued mournful chorus which, when he traced out individual threads of it, proved to be men groaning, sighing, choking—every conceivable lament of the human spirit. What made it all the more pitiable was the hopeless quality of their plaint. To Peale, vigorous and strong and with a memory of the fresh, stormy air outside, it was at first unbelievable that so many of them would endure this misery when only a trap-door and a skeleton crew stood between them and freedom; it was but two or three hundred yards to the Long Island shore, and there were boards aplenty to rig up a raft that would carry them across in the darkness.

The answer was too apparent: These men were not in their full vigor and never again, probably, would be. Their bodies had begun to rot and their spirits were at the last, stubborn level, below which is death. The tyranny of one trap-door and one solitary guard was enough to quell them.

He saw the gray bull's-eye of a port across from him and started toward it, only to stop, gesturing futilely in the dark. That looked to be the sole air vent in all the extent of the ship, and to reach it he knew he would have to cross a solid carpet of men. He turned another way. It was very slow travel; always he felt bodies in his path and he had to reach down with his hand to find space enough to place his feet.

They were like the dead, unprotesting, and with only some small sound or twitching to indicate they still lived. Once he lost his balance and stepped on an arm, and drew back, expecting protest. None came, and he arrived at last at a vacant strip between two silent figures and laid himself in it, marveling.

He told himself that he would have a night-long vigil. Never in this dungeon of hopelessness could he find rest, and so he rolled face to the floor. He knew not how long he was awake; but at last the poisonous vapor drugged him and he fell into a state that was neither sleeping or waking. Some time, when the small bull's-eye of light shone dimmest, a great agonized cry rang through the hulk from bow to stern—the death cry of a mortal. After that, profound silence settled over all.

HE WAS roused at last by a cold draught of air pouring on his body and by a ringing cry repeated again and again.

"Rebels, bring up your dead! Rebels, bring up your dead!"

Rising from his confined position, he found a foggy light billowing through the open trap-door and the full, ruddy face of an English officer peering down. Looking about, he saw the sad spectacle of better than a thousand men waking to face another dreary day of confinement. They were packed together like sticks of wood, with here and there figures sprawling across others, at right angles.

One by one they rose and made their way uncertainly toward the ladder, stooping at places to pinch and examine certain bodies who did not move. They wore a ghastly color and their faces were drawn and sagged—an illusion, he thought, of the early morning light. The man immediately behind stirred, put a shaking hand to Peale's shoulder and with that support rose. He had not seen Peale's countenance, but his finger tapped slowly on the civilian suit and he spoke in a dead level voice:

" 'Tis a new man come to crowd this hell. I can see it by the neat fixin's on yer coat."

When Peale swung about he knew that it was not the gray light that made prisoner's faces so; it was not an illusion but the pallor of disintegrating flesh.

This one was nothing but a parcel of bones wrapped indifferently in parchment. Something in the eyes told of youth; elsewhere was the sign age. His hair was gray, his teeth hung loosely in white gums. Once he had been a powerful fellow, for the shoulder joints were far apart and his ribs, each of which was outlined through the cotton shirt, were well sprung. But the muscles that once he had flexed and felt pride in were shrunk to nothing. He must have seen the flaring compassion in Peale's face for he observed, mournfully:

"Well, friend, look on one betwixt earth an' purgatory. I kin straddle both regions mighty easy, I tell you."

Peale felt the need of liquor then. "Often have I heard tales of this place but never did they match the living truth. Who are you, man, and how long have you been here?"

"Sharon Eastman—Haslet's regiment. I was took with Stirling at the skirmish on Long Island, August last."

"And not exchanged yet?"

"Not a bit of news have *I* heard about exchange. But 'tain't likely I would. When I was still strong I tried to escape. See fer yourself how far down I come since then. Oh, no, they ain't no exchange fer me."

The guard's warning issued again.

"Bring up your dead, rebels!"

Men worked sluggishly sewing blankets around several figures. A party of six spent their feeble effort lugging one such mournful burden to the upper deck. Sharon Eastman pointed with his thumb.

"This be a sickly ship. Ten die each blessed night. 'Tain't long before I'll pass up them stairs like that. 'Ud gone sooner, but I come o' tough stock. Y've got no mess, yet, o'course? Well, stick by me for a time. 'Tis our first turn at the kettle."

An officer, followed by four stolid, heavily armed mercenaries, descended and went toward the center of the hold, where a big copper kettle swung from the beams. Beneath it was a pit of earth on which a fire was now blazing. The officer raised his voice.

"Bring y'r rations up, rebels! Mess by mess. No tarryin', now, or I'll see to 't ye lose y'r proper turn."

Several fellows grouped about Sharon Eastman who seemed to act in the capacity of a non-commissioned officer for his mess. From some place along the dark crannies of the ship's hulk he fetched a shank of beef and a bucket of moldy peas. Peale looked upon the meat with a fresh disgust of senses. It was raw and in a state hard to describe—a stinking, maggoty piece of provender unfit for human consumption.

The group followed Eastman hungrily toward the kettle. Some one had already bailed water into the kettle; green-scummed bilge water, nothing more. Without ceremony Eastman dropped the meat into this steaming brine and stepped back, eyes cocked on the officer.

"I assure you," said Peale, "I want none of that. I've long felt the need of a fast and now's the opportunity to take it."

"Such squeamishness will pass," observed the officer coldly.

Boots tramped across the deck above them and a tackle squealed under burdens being lowered over the side. Peale saw a blanketed body pass down across a porthole and heard the shouted directions of a guard. Back of him clustered a line of men, waiting their turn at the kettle. The officer took his watch and, after a period that could not have been more than five minutes, raised his hand to Eastman.

"Pull your meat out. 'Tis done."

"Done?" spoke up Peale angrily. "The filthy stuff's not even warmed."

"Take it out and give way."

"D'ye require men to be cannibals on this cursed ship?" demanded Peale.

His fist went into the tub and emerged with the meat; this stringy whitish stuff he thrust under the officer's nose. The latter stepped back with a wry face, at the same time plucking at his sword hilt.

"Fine filth for human bein's is it not?" asked the irate Peale. "If you think it's done, taste it."

"None of this —— sedition or I'll run y' through!" exclaimed the officer. Sharon Eastman grabbed at Peale's coat and pulled him away, whispering:

"None o' that. 'Twill serve no good. He'd spit you quicker'n a wink."

Peale surrendered the meat and watched the mess divide it, he himself refusing a share. Eastman poured into the hand of each a small measure of the peas, and thus they made their meal. Groups collected elsewhere going through the same mockery. At places he saw some of the newcomers like himself, standing aside and being jeered for their lack of appetite.

The trap-door was open and a few of the prisoners were crawling to fresh air. With undisguised eagerness he followed and soon stood at the rail, looking off through the fog to the city. Guards strode behind him—high helmeted Anspachers whose pigtails and dour faces indicated a savagery of heart that they really did not possess. Toward the stern, part of the deck had been penned off, and in it Peale saw a half dozen pigs and a cow which now was being milked. Forward, another burying detail clambered up the ship's ladder, back from their sad work on the Wallabout beaches.

But a scant five hundred yards separated him from Manhattan's shore; he had breasted twice the distance in waters no less dangerous. But to accomplish this in daylight was almost impossible, and before night came the trap-door would again bar him below decks. He cudgeled his brain for a way out. Certainly he could not stay long without embarking on that decline of flesh and spirit which so marked the other poor devils.

If he meant to break, he must break shortly. Through fire, sword or water—any chance was preferable to rotting away. Moreover, Captain Tremble must soon be looking for his prisoner and, failing to find him in the sugar-houses, would surely come to search the ship and march him back before a summary court. Therefore, if the man did not come during this day, the first darkness was time to move on his contemplated course. Somewhere on deck, in the pigsty or in a shadow of the guards' housing, he might hide. Or, failing that, a crown in an itching palm might help. These Germans had an unholy lust for plunder and felt no particular pride in the war they waged.

Anything to reach mainland, see Jane Welch once more and take that dossier he had put under the bed; then regain the Jerseys. The thought of the girl brought forward a fear that had been with him since the first moment of capture. Had he implicated her in any way by his presence at the house? Had Tremble's sharp glances pierced her secret? Peale, moving uneasily, believed not. She had said she was above suspicion and that the Englishmen residents in her house were too loyal to countenance the thought. For that matter, she had a plausible explanation; she might say Peale had looked like just another of the many traveling provincial squires who applied at her door for lodging.

In the fog he seemed to vision her as she had been on the hour of his capture—a tense figure, whipped by the wind, one white hand to her breast and her eyes filled with an emotion such as he had never seen before. Where could another woman be found like her?

Sharon Eastman stepped beside him, mumbling. There was a sly look on his face and he pointed furtively toward the pen of hogs.

"They're a-feedin' the porks. If y'll come quiet we'll steal some o' the bran."

"From where?"

"Why, out o' the trough. 'Tis not so hard to do an' it makes great porridge. When the Hessian turns his back—"

Peale shook his head. Eastman grumbled disapprovingly.

"Better take hold o' that p'ticklar appetite, friend. Y've got to eat."

"Where," asked Peale, "do they bury the dead?"

Eastman's bony finger swept the mud flats of Wallabout Basin. "There. But it's no great rest the dead get. When the tide washes out y'll see white bones from Rapelje's Mill to Remsen Point."

Peale ground his foot into the deck, swearing roundly.

"Is there no spark of decency in their —— hearts? Gad! It makes a man want to break them between his fist! Oh, I'll call some of their proud officers to account!"

"Not for a while, friend," was the dispirited answer. "If it's escape ye think about, better put the idea away. It's been tried many a time and but once do I know of a man succeedin'. And if ye fail it's outright death or suthin' worse. There's a dark hole for'd they use fer proud devils—half awash with bilge an' squealin' with rats the size o' your arm. Think twice, friend."

"I am done with thinking," replied Peale, gustily. "Did you ever hear of a guard bein' bribed?"

"I've considered it," said Eastman wistfully. "If I was the strong lad of another day an' had a gold piece I'd be tempted to try that method. These Hessians, they'd sell their mothers fer a bit o' plunder."

"Once the trap-door was left open—after dark I mean—and a dozen stout fellows got to the deck—"

"No, no!" said Eastman with as much emphasis as his frail body would admit. "*I* tried that. 'Twon't work. Y'll only make a fury that'll bring down the guards. And the new lads like yerself—there ain't enough o' them to push through by force. If ye mean to escape, do it by yerself. The poor boys below are beneath movin'. The last example was a-plenty to put fear o' God in 'em. Five slaughtered outright, friend, and two more in the dark hole till the rats bit 'em and they died o' plague, ravin' mad. Look to yerself only. Can ye swim?"

"Better than most."

"Then it's a fair chance ye have. But, mind me, if y' fail, carry right through till ye fall stone dead. Never let 'em pinion ye down alive."

An officer saw them together, talking thus earnestly, and came over with a sharp warning.

"No sedition on board! Separate!"

Eastman slid away. Peale stared at the shoreline, mind filling with the hope of release from the leprous hulk that swayed uneasily in the water. Once overboard, he would have no fear. Even in darkness he would have a few glimmering lights from the town to guide him on. Ashore, he would again be a free agent. Free enough at least to fight for himself. Here on the prison ship he could only watch disaster overtake him. And there was Maxwell waiting in the Morristown hut for his reply; there was Jane Welch—

This new-found turbulence of spirit caused the day to drag on interminably, made doubly dull by the lack of sun. Not once did the heavy fog disperse, or a clear sky appear. Occasionally rain fell and drove some of the feebler ones below. Toward midday there was a general movement toward the hold, but though Peale got as far as the trap, his freshened sense of smell rebelled at the sickening stench and so he returned to his post and began a study of the guards.

The previous night, on coming aboard, an English voice had assailed him, and even in the shadows he had seen the guard's stubborn English face. But, during the early hours there had been a change. Hessians now lounged at particular posts on deck, arms carelessly ready, their taciturn visages made all the more gloomy by their fashion of pigtailing their hair and by their tall, helmeted hats. Not one who did not wear an extraordinarily thick mustache. A child would have been frightened at the first glimpse of them; and indeed America had trembled when first they arrived.

Trenton had dissipated their false ferocity, and the towns and farms along the route of their march knew them now as greedy, lustful marauders more set on stealing the lead weights out of a clock than on fighting. They kept their places stolidly, watching like so many lazy mastiffs. Once Peale saw a prisoner sway and rub the elbow of such a Hessian. The man spoke a word of jargon and pushed the weak one away with his hand, not ungently.

He still had a few precious gold crowns in his pockets, saved from confiscation by his swift changing of prisons. Now, as his ideas of escape expanded, the money seemed the chosen instrument of salvation. From hour to hour he watched, until time came to change reliefs and another took post over the trap-door. They appeared to stand the regular two-hour shift and Peale calculated that the following relief would come on some short time before darkness; that guard was the one to approach with the offer of money.

He moved restlessly around the pigsty to starboard. The path from the trap-door to the ship's side was not an open one. Several kegs of molasses were piled between and a kind of alley led through them. Once past the guard he had to thread this and throw himself over the bulwark. He visualized every step of it. All he asked was but a moment's forgetfulness on the part of the Hessian sentry; a moment in which the trap-door might be left unbolted. So thinking, he watched the East River grow darker and more turbulent.

A cautious voice spoke into his ear.

"Come below, sir. There's a council goin' on."

Before he could turn his head one of the newer prisoners walked past, took a tour of the deck and descended. Peale tarried some moments, feeling conscious of an overseeing eye. Casually looking about, he saw no one watching and so followed down the trap and ladder to the hold.

Already dusk settled in the place and men were assuming attitudes around the port-holes. Some of the messes were fixing for the night meal. There seemed to be a sly expectancy in the faces he passed; faces that explored his stature as he walked along the dim alleys. News, he decided, traveled quickly among prisoners.

Toward a far corner he saw the messenger who had summoned him and pursued his way with a certain air of disinterest. Yet his intuition told him what was abroad half-way toward the stern, and therefore he was in a measure prepared when Sharon Eastman rose from a blanket and intercepted him, whispering rapidly:

"Remember what I told ye, friend. Play a lone fiddle. Have nothin' to do with gen'ral mutiny. *That's* beyant hope!"

Peale nodded and went on. Beyond a square oak post, green with mold, he came upon six of those with whom he had ridden on the barge. All were resolute fellows, though ragged and dirty, and all turned on him a singular glance of hope that the messenger presently undertook to explain in a subdued voice:

"We got our bearin's on this ship, sir. 'Tis the opinion of six of us—all that's got spirit—that if we ever wish to see liberty again it would be better to make the attempt now. And since I knew you to be one of Maxwell's officers—seen you on parade one day—I made it plain to the rest you should take the lead and give us some encouragement."

"What had you thought?"

"Ah, that's the infernally hard question to answer. We'd thought to force the trap-door after dark and scatter. Once the passage was open the rest of the poor devils might take heart and follow after. That would simplify things. 'Twould be no task then to disarm the Hessians and control the ship."

"But if not?" asked Peale.

"Well, if we must count on only ourselves, it's a matter o' reaching the bulwarks and divin' for it."

"Can all swim?" persisted Peale.

The spokesman was interrupted in his answer by another, more forthright.

"No, but —— all tories, I'll take my chance on sinkin' ruther'n fester here! Besides, half them molasses kegs are empty, an' bunged up. Good support fer a bad swimmer. I'll chance it!"

"You'll give us a lead?" persisted the first speaker anxiously. " 'Twas in the mind of some that maybe we'd be bringin' trouble down on the heads of the helpless. 'Twas the reason we should like your direction in case o' trouble."

Peale harked to Sharon Eastman's warning and dismissed it. If there were men to make the effort at liberty his was the privilege of throwing in his lot with them.

"I had thought of a plan," he said, scanning the circle of anxious faces. "It's fair dark now. Make no undue move together, but slip toward the foot of the ladder, after it's beyond being seen, and wait for my word. Once on deck, quiet is the word and every man to his own resources."

He left them and made his way back through the thickening gloom. Overhead was the tread of sentries, and when he reached the deck again and expelled the cloying air from his lungs he found a new guard had been posted at the trap—another dour creature, hardly distinguishable from his brethren. Peale, glancing about him, thought each and every one of these mercenaries possessed the same avidity of plunder in their eyes.

There were, at the moment, no inquisitive faces bent his way and the fog of the coming dusk had begun to foreshorten distance on the ship. So, mustering his resources, he caught the Hessian's attention by a nod of his head.

"Do you understand English, friend?"

The mercenary stood at ease, arm thrown around his bayoneted weapon. His features were cast in one unblinking, taurine expression. Peale felt a degree of helplessness.

"I could wish for a knowledge of languages now," he murmured. "I doubt if he'll comprehend signs and it would draw attention. But there is one tongue he'll understand, I vow."

Taking a crown from his pocket, he bent as if to look at the buckle of his shoe and slipped the crown beneath his heel. Rising, he moved away, exposing the money.

The guard's eyes fastened instantly upon it and remained there for an indefinite period. Peale stepped back on the piece to recover the man's attention and then looked at the cloudy sky. The mercenary's bold features lost their rigidity when the prisoner moved his attention to the trap-door and rather pointedly crossed glances with him. Deserting the coin a second time, Peale walked to the aperture and kicked his toe against the iron bolt which, at night, held the trap down. Again he commanded the Hessian's face with a steady glance, and ended by passing between the kegs and leaning on the bulwark of the ship.

The Hessian looked about to find whether he were unobserved, and then in a swift motion retrieved the crown. Peale nodded and flirted one finger not too conspicuously out toward the river. The Hessian seemed to nod his head—Peale could not be sure of that, but the sign looked favorable—and resumed his stolid posture, one arm wrapped around the bayonet.

An officer came from aft, calling out.

"Below rebels! Get below to your blankets!"

Not many had elected to stay above until the last moment of grace. Enfeebled, lack-luster creatures, they preferred stench and a little warmth to the chilly draughts of the harbor wind. Peale, almost the last one to duck through the trap, turned to catch the Hessian's eye. As he passed below, closely followed by another straggler or two, the trap slammed and the iron bolt clanked. The English officer spoke a word and marched away, his boots making a small, mincing echo in the hold. They were trapped once more for the night.

Of a sudden it was dark with no more than a grayish beam shooting through the ports. Peale, standing at the ladder, began to make out once more the rising chorus of human misery. Here were the hours when courage ebbed. Men, shut in upon themselves by the lack of vision, began to be aware of their proximity to death and to bewail the fact in slow and measured groans. Peale shook his head compassionately at the sound, hardly able to master a torrential anger. These creatures were going through purgatory before their time.

A hand touched his elbow.

"Is there a flaw in the guards? Did you coax one?"

"I think so," murmured Peale. "If you hear the bolt—"

A musket butt grounded on the trap, and they were aware that the bolt was being worked from its slot, inch at a time, faintly protesting. Peale touched his neighbor and felt the man reach out to signal another. Advancing up the rungs, he stationed himself with his arms ready to raise the door. The protesting iron became silent and the musket butt tapped again, this time with less of noise. Peale was aware of his followers clustering behind and, reaching down to communicate a word of caution, he put his weight against the door and shoved, a little at a time.

Waist high to the deck, he looked around to reassure himself. The guard had slipped into the outer ring of darkness, apparently. There was no living sound from fore or aft and nothing but the small sough of wind and sigh of the East River current. Between the molasses barrels Peale saw the glimmering lights of New York town.

Reassured, he got to the deck, laid the trap soundlessly down, and stood silent, checking his following one by one as they emerged, breathing as if from great physical exertion. There was an even half dozen of them and he wanted all to be assembled at the ship's railing before breaking the silence. As for a general uprising, he had banished it from his thoughts long ago. The bulk of the prisoners had ostentatiously rolled themselves into blankets before dusk, as if washing their hands of all trouble. It was for the chosen six to run the gauntlet.

His senses were preternaturally sharpened by suspicion, and he had not taken a step forward before he knew that the worst of his fears was about to be realized. They were ambushed, trapped, betrayed by the Hessian who had taken his crown. He could see nothing or hear nothing to justify this belief, yet he knew that they were ringed around by guards and that the next pace toward the molasses barrels would loose a bitter, bloody encounter.

It was one of those impalpable shutter-like warnings that rise from utter blackness; all stalking animals know these, and sometimes men, fighting for their existence, are pitched to a condition where they, too, become aware. Poised on the balls of his feet, he was at the necessity of making a decision, with Sharon Eastman's warning rising to guide him: "If y're caught, go down fightin'. Don't let 'em take ye alive!" And were it not far better for men to die instantly than to suffer decay? In the encounter they might score something for their imprisonment; the gods willing, they might come out on even terms.

"Break!"

It was a signal. From the molasses barrels came a driving storm of lead. A bullet fanned his cheek and his nearest companion sobbed like a broken-hearted child and fell at his very feet. The kegs rolled away and they were hemmed in. The silence of the river was riven by lusty cries.

Peale knew, even as he crouched low and came up beneath a guard's weapon, that he and the rest were utterly lost. The attack was too vicious and too sudden; there was too much weight behind it. If a single man escaped over the side that tragic night, he might account himself lucky. So thinking, he got his arm around a mercenary's fat throat and brought him down.

The both of them were trampled on and

kicked as others passed and repassed the piece of deck over which they fought. The Hessian, greatly overbalancing Peale by his bulk, sought to bring his rifle to bear. Peale felt the bayonet gouge his chest; he ran his hand down the length of the blade and found a good grip.

His knee knocked the Hessian's wind from the paunchy stomach. A twist and a solid blow and the trick was done; the Hessian lay still. Rising, he dashed toward the ship's side.

A lantern flared in his face and a sword flashed before his eyes. His bayonet averted a disastrous swipe of the blade; but at the same time he heard the alarm go out and resistance crumble behind and knew that the freed guards were swarming toward him.

"Rally! Here's the malcontent! Steady! Spit him if ye must, but try to bag the devil alive!"

That officer's very back was to the ship's bulwark. But a distance of five feet was between Jeffry Peale and liberty—a five feet that he could not cut his way through.

Lunging and smashing, he saw faces drop before him while the lantern's glow took on a bloody color. He felt blows on his body, innumerable blows, and his ears rang. Still he fought, trying to reach the elusive officer who held the treacherous light upon him and made him a fair target for all the surrounding mercenaries.

Barbaric oaths rang in his ears; he saw the point of his bayonet plunge through a tunic and come out with a jet of blood behind it. After that his vision reeled. Something thundered against his head and he heard, as from a remote distance, the officer saying curtly:

"Don't kill the devil! Take him for'd to the lazarette and throw him in. We'll give the rats company for a while. Ah! Well done! He's down!"

Vivid shells burst in his brain and a cannon roared and reverberated. After that salute all was dark. His last flash of thought was—

"Jeffry Peale, you are dead!"

CHAPTER V

ESCAPE

JANE WELCH'S house was a very comfortable place to be that blustery night, for the east wind, which all week long had whipped the coast with its sly temper, was making a final grand tour of the city. It swept the streets with malevolent intent, sending all pedestrians to the nearest shelter, fingertips stinging cold and eyelashes burdened with frost particles.

More than once officers of the guard had stamped in for a moment's stolen warmth and crawled reluctantly out again, enviously leaving Ensigns Bunch and Osbaldeston to attend the flaming pyre of oak on the andirons. These two were off duty this night and each in his own manner was trying to impress the lady of the house as she sat in the rocker and fashioned something with cloth and needle.

Both were rather desperately in love with Jane Welch, and showed it. With Bunch it was the sighing breath and languorous eye that begged for response; in short, every such artifice as the fashionable manuals on love-making indicated as proper for gentlemen. Osbaldeston, no less smitten, was severely handicapped by nature, for he scarcely uttered a word in the course of an hour and the least attention from the girl caused him to blush to the crown of his ungainly head and pucker his lips to hide a most painful self-consciousness.

Bunch was very scornful of his comrade and by every token considered his case as the farther advanced; but when she rose and put four mugs of cider in the ashes to mull Osbaldeston well nigh fainted; in passing she accidently touched his boot and this, according to the manuals, was a secret sign of young love coyly advancing to meet the gentleman's humor. Bunch noted it with thunderous brow and stabbed his brother officer with a killing glance, receiving in return a more or less ribald snoot.

All of this, of course, behind poor Jane

Welch's back. The ardent ensigns considered that she had never seemed more beautiful or more reserved; but in truth she was torn by every sound of the storm and when she ventured to raise her eyes to the men it was with a fear that they would read the truth in her eyes. This was the penalty of dissembling. They might harry Jeffry Peale throughout the miserably bitter-cold countryside or already have sent a stray shot into his heart; it made no difference. She must smile and politely respond to their small conceits.

Very fervently she thanked God there was sewing to bend over that they might not see printed on her face a question that would not leave her. Where—and why could not a kind Lord tell her?—was Jeffry Peale? Sleeping and waking, through three long days and nights, she had asked herself that. The provost guards had searched their dungeons and the irate Captain Tremble had inspected the hulks in the bay, all to no avail. Innumerable parties had gone out and more than one tavern—the Red Boar among them—had been wrathfully wrecked in the search.

And two court martials had sat as a result of the spy's disappearance. Perhaps no such uproar would have been caused had it not been for Tremble. But he, of all men, was not one to rest.

There was not an officer in New York more devoted to the royal cause, nor one more bitterly opposed to those who had rebelled against it. The man was a zealot, a humorless martinet who seemed incapable of pity. It was on record that he favored war without quarter; and the higher officers were well aware that if the result of the struggle depended on the sacrifice of a single life, Captain Tremble would be just the sort to step out and offer himself as the martyr. His was not a temper to cross lightly and his men detested him, at the same time carrying a discipline few other companies of the royal army could boast. All in all, he was an implacable, shrewd sort of character and perhaps the only one in the city Jane Welch feared. His eyes were too cold, too penetrating.

She woke from her thoughts to find Bunch speaking in his affected manner:

"Do you not think, lady, it would be jolly in Old England now? Sewing in a fine English hall before just such a fire and, mayhap, a few hounds snoozin' at hand?"

Osbaldeston looked worried, and started to speak. Then, remembering his shortcomings, he shut his mouth like a trout on a fly and watched the girl.

"Indeed it would be pleasant," she said. "But you must remember, gentlemen, I love New York, too. We provincials are stubborn people about leaving this land."

"Ah," muttered Osbaldeston in satisfaction, and then turned ruddy as she looked his way.

"Nevertheless," said Bunch gloomily, "I could wish for a stall at a Lunnon coffee house this night."

"And now," said she, "you have changed your desire. Which is it you would be? The squire or the townsman—"

The wind whipped into the room and the front door slammed. The girl's grave eyes turned quickly and then dropped. Captain Tremble stood in the hall, throwing off his cloak and hat. He turned, unsmiling, and bowed with a precise kind of courtesy toward her. As for the ensigns, he dismissed them at one glance and left them sitting silent and uncomfortable, constrained by his sternness. Taking a chair betwixt the fire and the girl, he rubbed his hands in dour silence for some minutes—the nearest he ever came to permitting himself luxury.

Either Osbaldeston or Bunch would have topped him by a head, for he was not a large man nor big-boned. And doubtless the combined age of the ensigns was not greater than his, for his temples were graying and fine lines showed in his face. But for all that, he bore himself like a fighting man; and he was known as a dangerous sword.

"Very cold," said he to the girl.

"Yes. I am glad I don't stand a guard tour."

"My belief is you'd stand it better than some of the nincompoops this army is now cluttered with." He snapped a finger at the ensigns. "One of you fetch some sticks for the fire."

Osbaldeston excused himself and went back through the house. Bunch endeavored to make conversation.

"Have they got a smell yet of the spy, sir?"

"D'ye think I'd be tarryin' here if they had?" demanded Tremble sharply.

"Three days since he appeared at this house," mused the girl, head bent over the sewing. "What do you think happened to him, Captain?"

It was a question perhaps not wise, but it had to be uttered. She could not see Tremble's face, but she was very certain his gimlet eyes were fixed on her.

"And what do *you* think happened to him?" asked Tremble.

Jane Welch raised her head, startled.

"Me? La, what could you expect me to know, sir? He has vanished and—" here was a gentle gibe at him "—not all the king's gallant soldiers ensembled can find him."

Bunch spoke reassuringly.

"Be assured he'll never put his scurvy foot in these premises again. 'Tis nothing for you to worry about."

"Perhaps she'd not be worried."

It was a cryptic sentence, with the implication of more than one meaning. When Jane Welch caught Tremble's eyes she saw a faint malice in them and of a sudden she put her hands together and collected her courage. Bunch moved uneasily and blurted out a protest—

"Oh, now, I must protest—"

"Be quiet!" was Tremble's sharp rejoinder. He bowed a little at the girl. " 'Twas not a charitable or Christian remark. I do beg your pardon."

But the malice, the slight doubt persisted. It was the first word of doubt ever directed at her and it came like a direct challenge. She had always feared him for his penetration, his animal-like intuition. Now she knew she had him for a critic, an enemy. Without answer, she dropped her head and, quite unannounced, the picture of Jeffry Peale was before her, as it had often been the past eventful hours.

He was like many others who had traveled the dangerous path before him; and yet he was like none. Those others were gallant fellows from every State and every rank; they were gay and, like gentlemen, they paid her brief court as an appreciation of her own courage. Then they were gone and in time their faces merged, one into the other, until she could not remember them as individuals.

But she knew she would never forget the sight of Jeffry Peale, even if ten thousand others came after. The secret of Jeffry Peale was in his eyes. There his strength and weakness rested side by side. She had never seen this wistfulness of a hungry man, this mild distrust of self, this shining light of ambition so twisted and entwined before. A brave soldier he might be, but first and always he was like a boy looking at some far-off star. Quite clear, quite humble.

Tremble's dry, brittle voice broke athwart her communing.

"If the lady would be so kind as to give us her society a moment—"

She smiled.

"You must excuse me. I often fall into a dreaming."

Bunch smirked, as if he quite well knew what this dreaming was about. Osbaldeston came tramping back with the wood and, greatly to Tremble's irritation, threw it a-clatter on the floor.

"Quite a few of these provincial women keep secret company with themselves," announced Tremble. "I sometimes wonder if they are so Tory as they profess to be."

Osbaldeston, behind Tremble's back, drew one finger across his throat and swiftly pointed to the captain, grimacing. But Jane Welch knew she was being fenced with and, on her guard, answered evenly enough:

"You have no great regard for a people

of these provinces, have you, Captain Tremble? Neither for rebels or Tories or women or children."

"I could wish," said Tremble with a quietness that chilled the girl's blood, "that everything pertaining to the provinces had never existed. I could wish to see it all in ashes—a desert—back to the red Indian." He bowed again, without offering pardon, and pointed toward the fire. "I had wondered if that cider—"

"It is quite ready," said she, putting her sewing aside and rising. She drew out a mug and handed it to Tremble. "I offer this to you, Captain, with better grace than to return your compliments."

His thin lips pressed to an even finer line.

"I never dissemble my feelings," said he and blew into the hot drink.

He was not destined to taste it. The door burst open again and a very frozen aide came into the room, speaking to Tremble!

"The colonel's wish, sir, is that you will turn out your company and scour the city. The spy has come to life—bursting out of a dungeon on the *Whitby* and leaping into the river."

Tremble set the mug on the floor, transfixed the courier with a steely gaze and thundered:

"On the *Whitby?* Ye mean to stand there and tell me they've kept the rascal *concealed* from the gallows? I inspected that ship two days ago!"

"You know the commander of this ship, sir. And the quality of the dungeon."

"Thought to kill him by a more eventful way, eh? By gad, there is too much of private vengeance going on in this army! And now he's loose once more! Well, I'll find him if I must wreck every house in the town. And when that's accomplished I'll see to it the fine gentleman in charge of the *Whitby* is kicked out of the king's service! Bunch—Osbaldeston—come with me!"

He stalked into the hallway with something very near predatory joy on his face. Bunch, cowed by the captain's manner, followed humbly after, casting a last beseeching glance at the girl who sat still, unmindful of her needlework. But Osbaldeston kept his place, turned dogged. Tremble, ready to go, found him tarrying and sent a more peremptory challenge at the young man.

"Osbaldeston! D'ye hear my command?"

"Yes, sir," answered Osbaldeston, "but I'm not of your company and therefore not under your immediate command."

"D'ye mean to disobey?" shouted Tremble, advancing a step.

"I obey such as have direct authority over me," replied Osbaldeston stubbornly. "But y're not *my* company commander and this is my free night. I'm within my rights, sir, and you well know it."

Tremble's hand went to his sword and it seemed as if he meant to force the subaltern from the room at the point of the blade; then his features resumed their noncommittal cast and he retreated, flinging a warning over his shoulder:

"Very well, sir. I shall see you properly scorched, when this affair is over. Bunch? Why're you rooted there, a-gaping? Out, man!"

The door slammed and Osbaldeston was left alone with Jane Welch, a great deal disturbed, but sticking manfully to his contention.

"He's a born devil," muttered the ensign. "Maybe I'd gone without a fuss if he'd not played the boor to you."

"You have upset the will of a dangerous man," warned the girl. "He will give you trouble."

"I'm not sure. My captain bears a vile hate toward the martinet; if it's to be a court, I'm bound to have plenty of friends."

She returned to her work and, thus screened of countenance, asked a question—

"When the messenger spoke of the dungeon—of private vengeance—what did he mean?"

Osbaldeston squirmed.

"Some things are better unsaid."

"And as long as I have been here I have not heard about it. It must be a silent conspiracy among you. I should like to know."

Osbaldeston scowled.

"You'll find some officers who don't approve—and I'm of that party. The simple fact is, Miss Jane, there's some foul holes on the *Whitby* where a man can be put in solitary until he dies. 'Tis at the discretion of the prison ship commander. Perhaps this spy was unruly—he did seem a stubborn fellow—and they chucked him down in such. I wouldn't doubt but what he had a hand in the last prisoners' break."

"Ah," said the girl, and began to sew furiously.

Osbaldeston, having spoken more in the preceding quarter hour than during a whole week, subsided, staring into the flames. Outside, the wind began to carry toward them sounds of the freshened pursuit. A section went by at the double, boots making a great deal of racket in the night. A rifle sounded elsewhere, the first false alarm of several to follow as the evening went on. And at each such shot the girl flinched until at last she had to get up and move toward the window. A troop of horse passed the street on the gallop.

"What are they doing?" she demanded impatiently. "Do they need to send the whole army to scout for a single man? La, it seems ridiculous."

Osbaldeston looked surprized.

"Now, Miss Jane, I shouldn't let your sympathy carry you away. He's but a spy and he knew the odds when he took up the game." Then, with a quiet boyish frankness he added, "Perhaps it ain't fair, exactly, to harry a creature—but would you ever call war fair? Oh, I'm no fire-eater and, between you and me, I'd as soon they'd give the rebels terms and call it quits."

She made a great effort at controlling herself and resumed her seat. Hardly had she done so when an elderly housemaid came through from the kitchen. She knelt at the fire and put on a fresh log; then, taking up the mug of cider so recently abandoned by Captain Tremble, she shot a glance at Osbaldeston, who was turned a little away with his face to the flames and his mind somewhere in merry England, then with a swift motion of her finger, caught the attention of Jane Welch. She was a dark, sharp-faced woman and at this particular moment her eyes rolled with unwonted agitation, rising and falling to convey a wordless message. Her head bobbed forward, indicating the rear of the house, after which she went back through the door and closed it with a telltale slam.

Jane Welch's needle poised, and of a sudden she uttered a small, disappointed "La!" and turned a vexed brow on Osbaldeston, who emerged from his reverie.

"What?" he asked.

"I had meant to get three yards of good sagathy cloth this very afternoon from the mercer—and I forgot. Well, the evening's wasted now. If I but had it—"

Osbaldeston was instantly on his feet. "'Twould be only pleasure for me to get it, Miss Jane. The mercer at the corner?"

"No, the mercer farther down—on Beaver Street. I am ashamed to send you on such a night and mayhap the shop will be closed."

He was already struggling into his cloak and half-way to the door, a pathetically eager young man scarcely beyond the school age—a subaltern who found little to please him in the swashbuckle of the military.

"If the fellow's not open I'll soon enough bring him 'round," he assured her and ducked into the turbulent night.

The girl sprang up as the latch of the door fell and hurried to the kitchen where the housemaid awaited, out of breath, eyes wide with excitement.

"Oh, laws—laws! Missy Jane, *he's* in the shed, half dead and the clothes on him no less'n so much ice! Laws, what *will* we do?"

She wrung her hands and plucked at the younger girl's shawl. Jane Welch drew in her breath.

"He lives then? Oh, how kind is life! Sally, don't wring your hands so! Bolt the front door and close the hall door. Hurry! I'll help him in while you watch! He must go in my room—'tis the safest! Don't stand there so cravenly—run!"

She pushed the woman away with both hands and then, pulling the shawl about her, went through the back door, crossing a windy yard and coming to a stone house. It was very dark and very cold and when she got into the shed she heard the short, uneven breathing of a man badly shaken. She struck his foot and instantly she was crouched beside him, her white hands crossing his face and feeling his body tremble uncontrollably. It was as the maid had said; his clothing was like so much ice armor and his hair was beginning to freeze together. Water dripped from every part of his clothing.

"Oh, my poor boy! Come, can you raise yourself a little? Here's my arm. You are shaking terribly! Make one effort—Jeffry. One big effort. Are you past it?"

"In—in the house? No. Bad for you. Get me a blanket—and—let me lie!"

"And perish! Come up!"

He made the effort and fell back; but it served to send the blood into chilled members and with her arm beneath him he finally got to his feet. Steadying him, she led the way out of the shed and to the house. Once in the kitchen it was easier, but when the light fell on his haggard, bloodless countenance she checked a cry.

It looked as if he had been cruelly beaten. Long welts lay across his cheeks and blood was still caked in his hair, even though he had crossed a river. He looked tired, tired beyond the power to tell, and there were lines on his face that had never been there a short three days ago. The prison ship had left its mark.

But it passed belief that he had succeeded in coming away at all.

The girl, guiding his feet upstairs, could hear his heart beating slow and hard. Coming to her bedroom door, she threw it open and as quickly shut it. Peale swayed a little and then without any great expense of effort, walked to the bed and sank down. The maid put her head in the room and was dispatched on an errand.

"The wine, Sally, and a plate of that fowl we had for supper. Bring hot water. Leave the door bolted. If the ensign must knock we'll say we had become afraid."

Peale looked up at her, speaking easier.

"My lady, they had about run me down. 'Tis strange how a man's mind will stay clear while muscles grow dead and the heart falters. I saw myself die, tonight—and yet here I am. 'Tis not so bad as I had thought, for I feel a little life coming back."

"You have gone through more than you can forget," said she. "The mark is on you."

He moved his hand.

"Oh, that will fade. In another hour I shall be fit. Where a man is sound, his muscles soon come back."

She went over and knelt by the fire, stirring it up with fresh wood.

"I have heard rumors about the prison ship—all unpleasant. They spoke of a dungeon. Were you in it? How did you get out?"

"The ship's commander," replied Peale, with a very faint trace of humor, "had his own notions of torture. I failed of one escape and so was put away with the rats, knee high in bilge-water and nothing but bran and water once a day. They thought they had me broke, but the guard who fed me tonight at dusk was a careless rascal and I surprized him and hauled him into the hold after me. A simple thing then to dive over and swim.

"I had not figured the water to be so cold. It cuts like a knife. Once ashore I was hemmed in and this was the only shelter I knew. I thought to get that list from you and make my way out. But the candle must have been rather low, for when I knocked on your back door and regained the shed it seemed to flicker."

She had remained crouched by the fire, hands interlaced.

"So easy to say—and still—with all the black world about you and your marrow frozen—oh, Jeffry Peale, why is it you still remain doubtful of yourself?"

"Eh? And how could you know that?"

"Plain—so very plain."

She meant to say more, but the maid slipped into the room with a tray of food. Peale rose from the bed and walked unsteadily to the fire, choosing a chair. The girl went out, without comment, and after quite some interval returned with an arm freighted with a man's suit.

"Your own must be gotten off quickly. Here is what my father once wore. 'Twill be small, but it's only makeshift until your own dries."

"Give me an hour," said he, "and I will be gone."

Jane Welch looked troubled.

"I could wish to believe it. But you don't know Captain Tremble. He has raised half the army in search. La! That's Ensign Osbaldeston rattling at the door, Sally. Go down and let him in. I shall be there in one moment."

"Come," grumbled Peale, "I'll not be caught here. 'Twould mean your betrayal."

"Rest awhile and I'll hear what's being said. As for betrayal—I fear but one man."

"Who is that?" demanded Peale with a show of concern.

Jane Welch noted his manner and dropped her eyes.

"Captain Tremble. But never mind. Eat and change your suit and rest. I'll be back after a bit and tell you the news."

He turned in his chair and watched her. As she closed the door she met his glance and saw there again the recurrence of that wistfulness which had so stongly marked him out from all others. She treaded the stairs and came upon Osbaldeston holding a package.

"Terribly long time," he apologized, "but I had to read the mercer out of bed and lecture him on the duties of a tradesman."

She took the package with a brilliant smile and reduced him to speechlessness with one short compliment.

"You are a most obliging gentleman."

There was a commotion outside and a sharp command. Dispersed soldiers ran for barracks and presently Tremble stamped in the house, a glum, bitter-mouthed figure.

"Luck, Captain?" she asked.

He warmed his hands at the blaze.

"He's in the city—that's certain. And I'll wager my commission he'll never get out after such guards as I've posted. The lines are doubled. Oh, I'll run him down! If day comes and he's not taken I'll make very short work of it with other means."

She folded her hands, smiling gently.

"It is no light matter to cross the power of a captain in his majesty's army, is it, sir?"

He favored her with a sharp glance and broke out, suddenly—

"Why don't you ask me what means I intend to use?"

"Why, sir, to what purpose? I am not interested."

He started for the stairs.

"No? Ah, madam, I doubt *that*. You are a very clever woman. But then all women are clever."

And with this shot he climbed upward. Osbaldeston glowered. Jane Welch collected her things and nodded at the clock.

"I shall follow his example. Good night, sir."

She summoned the maid with a glance. Together they climbed the stairway and passed into the room.

Jeffry Peale had made the change of clothing and was warming himself. Raising a warning finger, the girl moved over and spoke in very low tones.

"You can not go tonight. Captain Tremble has the whole city guarded. It would be death to try. You must sleep in this room."

Peale shook his head.

"But it's your room, my lady."

She pointed toward the other end of the place where a second bed rested in the shadows.

"Sally and I will sleep there. No, you must be quiet. Captain Tremble would see or hear any change we made. Sally, blow out the candles."

The maid obeyed and the room was plunged in entire darkness, save as the flames in the fireplace made a small yellow pool of light against the wall. At the end of the hall Peale heard a door close cautiously. It was Tremble's door.

CHAPTER VI

A LIGHT IN THE STORM

HE SLEPT deeply, and perhaps that was why he thought he had been in bed but a few minutes when he was awakened by a sound. The room was deserted, a fire burned cheerfully on the hearth and through the windows came a dim light like that of the hour before dawn. Throwing aside a quilt, he crossed the room—still dressed in the misfit suit—and looked out of the curtains. People moved in the street and soldiers filed by; overhead the clouds were particularly dense and momentarily growing blacker. It was so still that he heard quite plainly the voices of children around the corner and the click of feet on the cobbles. On looking at his watch he was astonished to find it almost noon.

His long abused body had taken opportunity to recoup its vitality, and while he slumbered the night and the day had rolled on and the storm had changed tactics, recalling the cavalry of the east wind and massing all the artillery of the sky.

There was a light tapping at the door, and on his summons Jane Welch slid quietly through bearing a tray. There was food in sight and, what excited Peale's attention, a brace of dueling pistols. The girl put the tray on the bed and lifted a cautioning finger. On coming closer he saw her face had assumed a deep concern.

"The city's been scoured all day," she said in a low voice. "You've never heard of a wilder search. Five poor people in gaol as suspects and thrice some one shot at, being mistaken for you."

"And what are the pistols for?" he asked, watching her pour coffee.

"Bring up a chair, Jeffry, and eat. I am beginning to be afraid for you. Last night you couldn't have gone on. You were dead tired and the guards were double-posted, with every man on the street being stopped to explain himself. Today is your only chance, and it must be soon. Captain Tremble left ten minutes ago to bring back hounds from a farm up the island."

Peale lowered his cup.

"I'm to be treed with dogs, then?"

"But you have two or three good hours. It will take him that long to fetch them."

A sense of the danger—which he had before considered—came back to him fourfold.

"My lady, I should not have come. But my memory failed me as to the exact figures in that dossier you gave me to study. I meant to get it and go on. But I must've overguessed my strength, for when I reached the shed I could do no more than to make a small noise and give way. I had never considered they would use dogs—had not thought dogs would be available hereabouts."

"You can't harm me. They will carry the scent to the stone shed and no farther. Sally spread pepper between there and the house and even now is scrubbing the floor and the hall stairs. I am safe. And it will rain soon."

"Nevertheless the trail comes into the yard. That will be enough to put a suspicion into men's minds. Into Tremble's above all else."

"They may suspect—but they can prove nothing," she returned stoutly.

"You are brave—very brave. I sometimes wonder how you manage all the louts who come storming into your house."

A slight shadow came over her face.

"Sometimes—not often—but sometimes a man of ill-breeding presumes on decency. There is one below now. A friend of Captain Tremble, evidently, for they sat beside the fire, head to head, and spoke very low for better than a half hour. He dresses like a gentleman but is none."

"Then he does not keep his place?" demanded Peale, deserting his cakes and standing before her.

Her eyes flashed. She had touched a spark to tinder and the knowledge made the rich color come to her face, visible even in the darkened room.

"La, why do I worry you with my poor affairs? You must put your mind to getting away from here. These pistols may help you. And here in the closet is a sword of my father's."

She rummaged among clothes and brought it out, the scabbard gleaming in the fire-light. Peale glanced through the window to the ever blackening sky. One drop of rain splashed on the glass; in the street lights were twinkling, though it was past noon.

"While they look for me in every back alley I shall try a bolder way. What I need is an officer's suit that will fit and the list of troops you have. Is the house clear?"

"Save for this stranger."

"Go down and bolt the door and come back."

He heard her descend and presently, listening through the aperture of the portal, made out the wheedling, strangely familiar voice of a man. Jane Welch answered in curt monosyllables, at which the stranger's manner grew louder, more persistent. Peale closed the door with a feeling of impotent anger and crossed to the window.

The sky was a mottled black; far off to the north he saw a pale blue streak. Of a sudden lightning flashed and printed a vivid sprawling track across his brain which lasted long after its disappearance. In a moment a clap of thunder shook the town and sent its echoes thunderously back and forth. There was a moment's lull in which he heard a wind rushing through the street and the first small patter of rain. Then a second, more overwhelming flash lighted the buildings and streets in an intense electric glare and heralded a sound as of the heavens falling in. The windows rattled and the flames shot from the hearth into the room, scattering ashes.

He heard the door open and swung around. There, faintly illumined by the fire, he saw a man's arm encircling Jane Welch and a man's face bending forward in a vain effort to catch her evading lips. Her arms flailed at his chest and she spoke with a gusty passionate anger.

"Drop your arms, you swine!"

It was too dark to make out the character of the fellow. Peale seized the sword on the mantel and strode forward, feeling the blood rush toward his head.

"Step away or you are a dead man!"

The intruder sprang back and his hand went to the gentleman's blade at his side. Peale, peering at the blur of his face, had an uncomfortable memory flash into his head and elude him. Precisely at the moment the whole room was made day-bright by another of those transitory streaks of lightning and he recoiled as a man does from the sight of horror.

The intruder was Priam Lafferty—the same bulky, uneven comrade of the Morristown camp-fires. The same Priam with the lust of pleasure in his eyes. Out of that moment came Jeffry Peale's cry of detestation—

"Oh, you —— decoy duck!"

"Ha! So here you are! Tremble said ye'd been abroad. Well, my fine lad, your meat is burnt now. I shall have the pleasure—"

"You scurvy traitor!" cried Peale. "D'you stand there and feel like a man? Why, you dog, you should be hiding your face! And to top it y' pursue a woman! Gad!"

"The trull was not backward about bein' pleasant—"

"Stop! 'Tis always been your abominable conceit that all women were forward. Another word about it and I'll slit your heart!"

"Well, cockatoo, d'ye want to test blades?"

Peale turned from flame to ice. Silence

fell across the room like a blanket and he saw in one tragic picture the course of his friendship with Priam Lafferty from boyhood up. And where before he had always denied Priam's weakness he recalled now the odds and ends of pettiness, the bullying spirit, the avid search of pleasure. They led step by step to the present treachery. He bowed toward the girl and said evenly—

"My lady, if you will go outside and close the door."

In the following flash of lightning he saw her body swaying and her face turned on him, pale and concerned. Then it was dark and she had vanished.

He took a grip on the sword and shook it in his wrist, observing Lafferty's shoulders loom larger and hearing the man's mocking voice.

"It irks your straight-laced mind to find me turnin' politics, don't it? Why, —— you, Jeff, I've played false to the army almost a year! And I'm not ashamed! What's the use of sufferin' for nothin'? Bah, I'll be a man of consequence, drinkin' my wine long after you're dead and the army beaten. 'Tis only little intellects that abominate a change o' side. As for me, I am pliant and to show you how I cherish my new allegiance I shall spit you nicely and render you up to Captain Tremble."

"That," replied Peale without emotion, "reveals the heart of a jackal."

"—— you!" shouted Lafferty. "Up blade! Y've always assumed a superior air to me! Gad, but I've endured it for the last time! Up blade! At you!"

Peale was silhouetted, his back to the fire; out of the darkness he saw Lafferty's blade sweep, a flash of yellow running from tip to guard. His own weapon sang gaily and they were at grips.

Lafferty pressed; always he pressed. It was his temper, a temper that fitted well with any kind of conflict, growing hotter, stronger, more violent as the contest endured, with a small core of shrewdness within all this heat to preserve him from that blindness which usually rises of rage.

Peale gave way, feeling the opposite blade slide in and out with gathering strength. This was a tide he did not feel able to stem. Let Priam wear himself out. Parry, lunge, parry! The shuffling of feet across and around the floor. The click and rattle of steel on steel, overborne by the thunder and the fury of the rain just bursting about the house.

In the lightning he saw Priam's jaws set as they had never been before and the frenzy of combat blazing in his eyes. Darkness again. Parry—lunge! That time the man was halted. Priam who took defeat badly and stooped to conquer by trickery. Trickery! He must watch that.

Priam's voice taunted across the whining blades.

"You're strong, Jeff, but I'll wear ye down! Remember, I've done it before!" His own breath rose and fell in great sweeps and when they fought close to the fire-light his cheeks glistened with beads of sweat. Lunge! And this was the Priam so careless of his courtesies with Jane Welch. Power came to Jeffry's tiring arm. Here was a time to press! His blade ripped into substance and across the small space he heard Priam gasp.

"Done! Oh, by God, I'm done, Jeff!"

Peale halted, blade outstretched, seeing Lafferty's figure sag; if the man was done, why didn't that sword arm drop. Treachery! He leaped, hearing Priam's point penetrate his sleeve. His voice, remote from his body, spoke.

"Now I know I shall kill you, Priam. Stand fast, you dog, and meet my point!"

His arm was made of lead. It was suffocatingly hot and his neck-piece choked him. On blade! Thank God it stormed outside, that men might not hear! He saw the bulky figure shift in front of him and followed. Once more they circled and then he felt the weapon opposed him begin to tremble. Press!

Above the elements that clash of metal sounded and stopped. It was done! Priam Lafferty had got his pay. He stood, an uncertain figure with a face that, in the ensuing flash, was quite disturbed, drenched in sweat. The man's blade fell with a clatter and he began to sag, going upon his knees as if he meant to pray. Then he collapsed and the floor sounded under his bulk.

"—— you—Jeff—you beat me—this time!"

The door burst open and the girl ran through. Jeffry Peale dashed the perspiration from his brow and relaxed his aching muscles. Into his head came the most pressing thought.

"Now, my lady, your usefulness here is at end! You must come away with me!"

"Thank the Lord—oh, thank the Lord!"

By the light Jeffry saw again that wide-eyed emotion so inexplicable to him. He stepped away and ran an eye down the length of his blade to where the tip showed crimson in the yellow rays. He sheathed it and went to the girl.

"Come, we've got to be moving. Yourself and your maid. Is there a shelter you can find outside the lines?"

"My maid need not stir beyond the city. She has particular friends here. Once I give her the word she will disappear as if the earth had swallowed her. 'Tis her own secret."

"And you?"

She studied him for several moments, speaking at last in a subdued voice.

"I have friends beyond the Passaic."

"No nearer?" He shook his head. "My dear girl, d'ye mean you must travel back through all this weather with me? 'Twill be a hard trip. Have you no nearer friends?"

"I am sturdy," said she, almost meekly. "I can stand hard travel."

"Then we go. Haste! Company may burst in any moment. I must get a uniform." He caught up a candle and lighted it in the fire.

"Come, Ensign Osbaldeston is nearly as tall. This room—next Captain Tremble's."

He stood in the hall and issued swift directions.

"Have the maid get you a coach. Do you have the power to get beyond lines?"

"Oh, yes. It's been my habit to go into the country every week for fresh vegetables. I have a pass."

"Good! Then have the maid tell the stableman to bring around a horse. Wrap yourself well, meanwhile."

He slipped into Osbaldeston's room and crossed to the clothes closet. There were several uniforms hung on the wall, some of them rather splendid things for parade, even by candlelight. Without much hesitation he picked himself a plainer field-service suit and set about getting into it, speeded by the thought that at any moment officers might return to the house —and that Tremble was probably at this time returning with hounds. The hounds, he told himself, would be of little use after the torrent of rain.

Pulling on boots, he looked for a cloak and hat. With them he returned to the girl's room, to find her standing ready, holding out a slip of paper to him. It was the list. He thrust on his cloak, buckled on the sword and pocketed the pistols.

"My lady, you are going to share rough fare."

"I am not afraid—hush!"

She ran to the door and after a bit drew in the maid, dripping wet.

"'Tis ready, ma'am. And the driver bids ye come. The horse, sir, is behint."

Peale nodded.

"Go ahead, my lady. Pass through the lines and have the coachman drive at a fair rate. I shall be coming behind."

"If you meet a like officer," she mused, "or the guard refuses you—"

"'Tis as dark as a cave out, and they would have to peer close. As for the guard—that will take care of itself."

The girl bent forward and kissed the maid.

"Fend for yourself, Sally. After this war—"

Peale turned away, a little affected by the parting of the two. Presently he heard them go down and not long after the coach rolled away. It was time for his own adventure. With a last look at the dead Lafferty he left the room and passed down to the front door. Holding the cape tightly, he ducked out, to be met by a fierce, driving wind. A hostler stood at the steps, holding a restive horse. Without comment Peale sprang into the wet saddle.

"An' who, sir, shall I s'y stan's back o' this?" asked the hostler.

"Put it to the account of Captain Tremble," replied Peale and spurred the animal into the gale.

He followed the street for a short distance, seeing here and there a solitary passer-by and once overhauling a file of soldiers who bent their necks against the bitter rain. But he felt safe; the elements conspired to protect him, and with a degree of elation he turned into a side alley and came presently to the guard where he was brought to a halt by a sentry's sharp challenge. He came abreast the man and leaned down.

"Have you seen a coach roll by the past few minutes?"

The guard, seeing the boots and the binding on the hat, spoke respectfully.

"Yes sir. Not five minutes ago. Your pass—"

"——!" shouted Peale. "Why did you let it get through?"

"The lady showed a pass," replied the sentry. "'Tis common for her to go out in the country, though I can't see why she should choose this day. Your pass—"

"Damnation!" exclaimed Peale. "You made a mistake! The pass was forged! That coach must come back!" And, without further parley he put a spur to his horse and dashed onward. He half expected to have a bullet sent after him; but as the semi-darkness took him under cover no rifle report sounded in his ears and finally, looking back, he saw the sentry standing in the roadway, an indistinct, uncertain figure. His ruse had worked.

"'Tis the same as has been done by reckless officers on our own lines," he muttered. "The British guard is no less gullible than the American."

He urged his mount to as fast a pace as the rutted, unreliable road would allow, expecting at every bend to catch a view of the coach. It had gone on at a better rate than expected, and with some small concern he began to count the odds yet ahead of them. The road was patrolled at intervals by out-guards and dragoons, and sooner or later he must encounter one or the other unless he turned aside.

Thus thinking, he found himself thrust without warning into the jaws of a trap. Riders loomed not twenty yards away—four of them—and in another five paces he saw a pack of dogs being led behind. This was Tremble returning home!

He jammed his hat farther on his head and rode boldly up to the group, giving way to the side of the highway. The rain was falling in torrents and the wind fairly drove his breath into his lungs. By the half-light he saw the riders straighten and turn toward him; and by viewing the size of their figures he picked upon the slight one on the far side as being Tremble.

The near man drew up as if to talk. Peale shouted a meaningless phrase into the teeth of the wind, pointed and kept on. The other man tarried, then gave his horse the rein. They forged southward and soon were lost. And at the next turn Peale saw the lumbering coach making hard progress in the mud.

Coming abreast the driver, he held up his hand and motioned to the side of the road. When the driver hesitated, Peale drew his sword and at that the horses swerved and the coach wheels, reaching the soft shoulder, sank deep and were stuck. Jane Welch put her head out of the door; Peale rode alongside, threw back the latch and opened it.

"Your arm!" said he.

She understood. Balancing herself on the coach step, she gave her arm and in a moment had swung outward and was sitting in front of Peale. He hesitated one moment, debating as to the coachman. But it was dark and the storm seemed in no way abating. Pursuit could not be particularly dangerous in the next hour. And so he forgot the man and drove his mount off the road and through the brush.

There was a field ahead and this he

took, traveling at the best speed possible. They were met by a fence which they skirted for fifty yards before finding a gap. The storm pounded them on all quarters, ceaseless, stinging in its force. Southward the thunder muttered, following the less frequent flashes of lightning. Out of this turbulence they saw the winking of a light, toward which the girl pointed.

"That's Tory—I know them!" said she, raising her voice against the wind. "You had better go around it."

He nodded and guided the horse into a ditch swollen with water. The ground rose sharply and fell away with equal abruptness. In front of them was the Hudson, a river of strength always, and now whipped and lashed by the gale sweeping through the gorge. They had a view of the immediate stretch out from the shore and could see the waves driving in upon the gravel. The girl turned a wondering face to him.

"Where are we going?"

He stopped the horse and slid off, offering her his arm. Once on the ground, he pointed directly beneath them. There, drawn beyond the water's reach, was an overturned boat and beside it lay a pair of oars.

"Fortune is with us! There is your Tory's skiff. I had expected to look farther. Here is our escape from Manhattan Isle."

IT WAS not much more than an hour later when the sodden afternoon was giving way to a premature night. Captain Tremble stood before the general with the look of a man bitterly disappointed. His usually severe face was even darker and his lips were nothing more than sharp edges.

"Give me leave to observe, sir, that I have never approved the freedom allowed suspicious characters within this city. It is here proved. This Jane Welch well duped us."

The general frowned.

"She bore excellent character, Mr. Tremble."

"*I* did not believe it and had I been given the support of any officer at all I should have searched that house last night. But, knowing the general infatuation for the girl—"

"Tut, sir," broke in the general testily. "We can not all have your penetration of mind."

The captain drew himself up rather stiffly.

"I do not mean to call any officer's ability into question."

"But," continued the general, "this girl and this spy must be overtaken. 'Tis a most flagrant flouting of his majesty's forces. I want them back here to suffer their fate. The coachman said they turned to the left, riverward. And now comes the word from Mr. Symmes that his boat is missing. There's a piece of addition for ye."

"Give me twenty horse and I shall bring them back," said Tremble.

"Get your dinner, sir, and I shall have a barge to put you over the river with an order on the dragoons stationed there."

"Let me disregard the dinner, sir. The sooner started the better."

The general favored him with an extraordinarily long glance and then reached for quill and paper.

"You live well up to your reputation. I believe you will get them."

"There can be no question of that," answered Tremble coldly. "I make it a matter of personal honor. They will not dupe me again."

CHAPTER VII

BLIND MAN'S BUFF

THEY crouched beneath the shelter of an oak, watching the glint of a farm house light some hundred yards away. Both were drenched, for the passage of the river was a tempestuous affair and the unchecked wind drove the raindrops through their clothes like so many knives. The ascent of the palisades on the western side was almost as difficult, and they wandered like lost children until a rugged pathway presented itself in the ever blackening night.

Overhead the tree branches cracked ominously, and now and again a weaker member came dashing down. The girl stood beside the trunk of the oak, shielded thus and by Peale's body.

"There is our next point of attack," he decided, indicating the farm light. "Give me your hand. I believe I can make out a path ahead."

"The rain is slacking, or else the wind's dying."

It seemed so, for as they stumbled toward the beacon the wind ripped less gustily across the parapets of the palisades. Peale waded boot-high through grass and came to a very muddy yard—the yard between barn and house most probably. Going onward at a sedate pace, he listened for dogs, blessing the tumult of the evening as he did so.

The light was of a sudden cut off from their view; passing onward, they again met it and stopped. The door of the place was directly in front of them. Peale left the girl with a whisper and advanced to the adjoining window. Between the drapes he had a view of a man sitting alone before the kitchen blaze, head bowed a little and lips moving soundlessly over the passages of a book. He was well past middle age, as evidenced from his very gray hair, and he seemed to be quite settled of conscience, else he would have closed his shutters long ago. Peale, sweeping the place with a curious eye, returned to the girl and led her to the door, rapping vigorously on the panels.

It came wide open after a brief moment. The farmer stood across the threshold, holding a candle high and shielding it with a palm. Before either of them could say so much as an apology he was speaking gravely.

"Come in to the fire."

The fugitives passed through to the kitchen while their host shot the door's bolt. Peale reached for the girl's cloak and held it near the fire; water began to puddle on the stones. The farmer removed the book he had been reading from the chair—Peale saw it to be the Bible—and beckoned the girl to sit.

"Drenchin' wet, the both o' ye. Let me knock up a stronger blaze. 'Tis well I let the coffee kettle simmer. Nawt a minute now an' y'll both have a hot drink o' it."

It struck Peale a little odd. He noted that when he removed his own cloak the farmer gave the British uniform but one short glance, after which his placid face changed not a whit. Certainly he was either a bold man or a very discreet one. At any rate, he poked the fire and presently had poured them both coffee, well mixed with cream.

"Sugar," said he, offering the drink, "I can't offer ye—and well ye should know why, with both armies payin' its weight a'most in gold. Anyhow, it'll sarve to keep off the chills. My lady, y'd best draw a little closer to the heat."

"You are very obliging," remarked Peale. "One would think we were expected."

"Ain't it the Lord's command to entertain strangers?"

"Tory and rebel alike?" parried Peale.

The farmer's mild face set in rather resolute lines.

"That's a distinction the Bible knows nawthin' about."

"I vow," said Peale, "but you are a strange gentleman. Do you not run the risk of being called easy in politics?"

"Easy?" The farmer's temper was roused. "Nawt a bit of it! I have politics a-plenty. Reckon I could ask the same o' ye."

"You see the uniform," replied Peale, pointing to his borrowed regimentals.

"Eh! What of it? Is it likely a British officer would be flounderin' around this unsettled country in the dark o' night—an' afoot?"

"Then let's consider the other side of the case," said Peale. This mild looking farmer was a great deal shrewder than first appearance indicated. "If my politics are doubtful it is the same with most Jersey civilians."

"True enough," agreed the farmer. "An' why? Because, friend, we're harried first by one side, then t'other. Never a sure day do we know, nor a peaceful night do we own. 'Tis all right for the soldier inside his camp to speak ill of the citizen for not holdin' a faster allegiance. Put yourself in between fire for a month and y'll see the reason we *seem* fickle."

"To come to business," said Peale, "have you got a team and wagon?"

The farmer hesitated, then with some reluctance admitted he had.

"We need it," continued Peale, "with you to guide us. We must put ourselves well to westward before daylight."

It was not a pleasant prospect for the farmer and he mulled it over in his mind at great length, finally coming to a mild dissent. The weather was vile, the streams they had to cross were badly swollen and at any juncture they might be taken up by partisan troops.

"You see," broke in Peale with a trace of irony, "I am discovering your politics after all. As for discomfort and danger, look you to this lady. Are you less able to share such adventures than she? If you are a patriot, you will go of your own free will. But if you are comfortably Tory then I must confess I'll have to induce you with other weapons than persuasion."

The farmer shrugged his shoulders.

"If ye put it thataway, I'm your man. We'll hitch up. Ma'am, I'm a widower. If y'll go into the bedroom and raise the chest cover y'll find all my ol' woman's clothes. Better put on suthin' warm."

Peale accompanied him to the barn and held the lantern while the team was hitched.

Some twenty minutes later they were traveling over a black, uncertain road toward the Hackensack River. It was nothing more than a flat, springless farm wagon, uncomfortable in every respect and open to the steady fall of rain which now came straight down out of the sky. Peale and the farmer sat in the seat; behind and below this a place had been made for the girl, shielded by their bodies and wrapped in a piece of ship's canvas. Peale held a well shrouded lantern for emergencies.

"Bear off to the right," he directed. "'Tis not discretion to take the road through Bergen or New Ark."

"So I'm to travel every cow path an' git stuck in every mire?" grumbled the farmer. "Well, y'll not make great progress."

"Bear off."

The farmer had some confidence the first few miles and they jolted away from the Hudson at a brisk pace. Peale lost sense of time; the night turned to a more impenetrable black, the water sluiced about them. Nothing was said, save that at long intervals the farmer urged his horse on with a "G'yup, Leader—Pull, —— ye, Prince."

And after what appeared to be six miles, but could not have been much more than three, he halted the team and clambered down from the seat with a very brief comment.

"Hackensack." He vanished beyond for some minutes, reappearing with a word of encouragement. "Luck's with ye, my boy. Tide's out an' the ford won't be so bad. Ma'am if you don't want to git wetter—"

Peale abandoned the seat and lifted the girl into it. The farmer set the brakes; they slid down a sharp embankment, wheels skidding. Water muttered through the spokes and as the driver released the brakes he began to berate the horses:

"G'yup—Prince—Leader! Tarnation ain't ye ever been in water afore? *G'yup!*"

The river slapped the wagon bed and surrounded Peale's boots. They were swung downstream, team and all. The farmer, unmindful of his company, swore roundly and lashed out with his whip. Perched thus between defeat and victory, the horses struck a sand bar and dug in. The wagon came to a halt that very nearly knocked all of them into the water. The whip lashed again and then they were splashing to the shore. They climbed the far bank and once more settled to a steady gait.

"Dangerous chances ye take by keepin' to the back roads," warned the farmer. "That ford now—we made it by no more'n a lick an' a promise."

"'Tis plenty. We got across," replied Peale quite simply.

In something less than an hour they reached the Passaic; here a very rude bridge spanned the stream, the work of the near-by settlers. They crossed gingerly, feeling the rush of current sway the whole structure. Once beyond, Peale was offered the choice of a main highway to Morristown or a lesser road that swung south. He chose the latter and they jolted onward, silence settling.

They had now entered a land of great uncertainty, situated between the outposts of both armies and belonging to neither. Each week saw some raid, British or American; no man knew just when a company of dragoons might swoop down, confiscate a few supplies, overturn a wagon train and dash back for shelter. And when hoofs drummed in the distance it was always uncertain until the party came to view which side was to present itself. The inhabitants, accustomed to these swift, unexpected forays, had long past learned to conceal all livestock and all grain; and they hid their true allegiance behind countenances either artful or suspicious.

It was a strip of territory full of peril for the fugitives. At no place, short of their own outguards, could they show their faces without the risk of betrayal. They could count on absolutely no help, and at every hint of traffic on the roads, were under the necessity of hiding.

Jeffry Peale grew more and more apprehensive as the night wore on and the wagon made increasingly poor progress over the abominable highways. The farther they went, the greater appeared the farmer's caution. Perhaps two hours beyond the crossing of the Passaic he stopped his wagon and crawled down, taking the lantern with him. When he returned from a short reconnaissance of the road he offered Peale another choice of directions.

"Reached the hills. If ye go on straight it's nigh fifteen miles to Morristown, with the Passaic to cross again. Er ye can branch south to'rd Springfield. What's in yer mind?"

"South. My destination's—" Peale was about to announce the location of his brigade's headquarters, but checked himself. It helped nothing to give the man his true course. So he contented himself with repeating. "Turn south. And press the team a little faster. We've made poor progress the last hour."

"Nawt a bit d'ye think o' the team," grumbled the farmer.

"A great deal I think of them," contradicted Peale. "But somewhat more of our own hides. Press on."

They turned, the road if anything worse than that which they left, and the texture of the night as black as the bottom of a well. One comfort, indeed, came to them; the rain fell off and after another hour or so of miserable travel turned to a dense mist that hung suspended in the air. The farmer noted it with a prophecy. "I know this land right well. T'morrer the fog'll be thick enough to cut with a knife. Won't see a dozen steps in front o' ye."

Peale crawled from the seat and knelt beside Jane Welch.

"I can't help but think of all the misery I have brought upon you."

"Don't. This is the sauce of a very uneventful life to me."

"I wish I could believe it," he muttered. "But it's no weather to expose you to."

"Ah, but Jeffry, I am strong. Do you know, I was raised on a farm and did all the chores a boy would do? La, I'm not afraid. Don't vex yourself. Don't think of me as a woman this night."

"And how shall I think of you, then?"

"As—a comrade."

"Well," said he, speaking rather low, "I have thought of you in many ways—Jane."

Several minutes later she began again.

"I see Captain Tremble's face as clearly as if he stood before me."

"And it's a face that augurs no good to

us," replied Peale. "I sh'd be willing to wager my commission he's abroad in the Jerseys this moment, not far from our trail."

"Might he overtake us?"

"If we tarried too long in this contrivance. Are you at all warm?"

"Jeffry Peale, *will* you stop worrying about me?"

Nevertheless he tucked the tarpaulin around her and, feeling unusual pleasure at having done it, clambered back on the seat.

THEREAFTER there passed between the party not a dozen words in four or five hours. Once the farmer stopped his horses to give them a breathing spell and they sat still and frigid. In that dreariest of periods, just before daybreak, the driver began a vigorous complaint.

"Look 'ee now. Hain't I gone fur enough to suit ye? A turrible hard trip it's been—and I've got to do it all over again."

Peale nodded in the darkness.

"Stop the team." He vaulted to the road and was gone for better than five minutes. Presently his voice rose from the wagon side. "Your journey's over. Give me your hand, Jane."

He lifted her to the ground, hearing her catch a breath.

"My body seems to have gone asleep. Oh, it will pass."

Peale spoke to the farmer.

"Sorry to say I haven't a penny. If you will give me your name I shall see—"

"Nawt a bit o' *that*," replied the driver in a suppressed, emphatic voice. "I'll have no name o' mine harked about. I'm peaceful. Let it go."

There was a rustle of cloth; the girl caught Peale's fist and pressed some solid coin into it.

"Let the gentleman have it. We are very grateful."

The farmer muttered a short thanks. With a great deal of caution and much murmuring at his team he got the wagon around. They heard it slushing off, unseen, and in a very short time even the echoes were lost in the night's thick air.

"I pity the man," confessed Peale. "But pity is a poor article for us to be spending now. Come, we've not far to go."

"Within the lines?"

"No, not that good. I judge we're something like five miles away. But there's a farmhouse and barn a short distance off. I've been past it many times before."

"Patriot?"

"Lord, a man can't tell about politics in this region. No, I suspect the fellow is strongly Tory. It makes no difference. We are going to use his barn for a few hours."

She was tired and, without knowing that she did it, leaned a little against him. They walked two or three hundred yards and entered a lane that brought them within hand's reach of a barn before they were aware of it. Peale fumbled for the door catch; not finding it, he put his arms to the nearest aperture and brought the portal away from the wall sufficiently to admit the girl and himself.

It fell back into place with a small protest. They were within shelter again, and presently buried in hay, feeling the first comfortable warmth since leaving the house on the Hudson. It was just beginning to get light. Afar, a dog barked.

CAPTAIN TREMBLE stopped the troop at dawn and rode alone to the house door, leaning over to knock with the butt of his pistol. After a great deal of delay a head appeared out of the window.

"What ye want?"

"Have you seen a man and woman riding along this road—the man wearin' British regimentals?"

"Nary," answered the citizen, pulling a nightcap from his head. "But I heerd a wagon pass summat beyant midnight."

"Going which way, sir?"

The citizen waved his hand westward. Tremble fixed his sharp eyes on the informer and inquired in a ringing voice—

"Are you loyal or rebel, sir?"

"As to that," grumbled the citizen, "it ain't none o' your business. But I'm Tory, if it'll ease ye any."

"So?" sneered Tremble. "A blessed fickle lot all you Jerseymen are. I should not misdoubt greatly if ye harbored rebels yourself."

"Yer privileged to come an' look," replied the citizen tartly, and withdrew from the window.

Tremble debated this course in his mind a moment. But the man had not seemed averse to inspection and so he turned away, loath to waste time.

Gaining the road, he led the troop onward at a rather rapid pace, considering the fact they had traveled very hard the past ten hours. Man and beast alike were coated with reddish mud and all were uncomfortably chilled. The fog pressed about them with increased density, seeming more like rain suspended in midair. Indeed, it was so thick that it burned their lungs. Two paces in front the highway vanished behind the gray, clammy wall.

Not much later Tremble burst through this wall and came unexpectedly upon a team and wagon greatly spattered with mud, the gray-haired driver half asleep in the seat. He came awake with a jump when Tremble issued a ringing "Halt!"

"Where, sir, have you been?" he demanded.

"Morristown," replied the driver promptly.

It was the guide who had conducted Peale and Jane Welch so far during the previous night. But if he was alarmed at the sudden appearance of a British patrol he did not show it. Instead, he stretched himself and returned the captain's fiercely antagonistic look with admirable serenity.

"Morristown!" thundered the captain. "Within the enemy's lines, eh? Trafficking with the rebels at midnight! D'ye know I could hang you properly for that?"

"For a-goin' to see my son who's held prisoner there?" asked the farmer very mildly. "I'm a respectable subject o' the king, mister, but I've noticed you gentlemen soldiers make little distinction between one side or t'other when it comes to plain citizens. Y'd as soon sack my house as the greatest rebel's."

"And so I would," replied Tremble with the utmost frankness. "This —— country is a nest of snakes. Have ye seen a fugitive couple pass by? Man an' woman—the man doubtless wearin' British regimentals?"

The farmer shook his head.

"Nawt a bit."

Tremble wasted no more time with him. Within the half hour he had reached another house and had propounded the same query in a like tone of ferocity. No, the citizen had had seen no such fugitives. But he had heard a wagon creak past not more than an hour or two ago, just before daylight, bound southward in the direction of American outposts. Tremble considered it at some length and finally turned to his sergeant.

" 'Tis our game, I'll lay ten guineas it is. Forward."

And he put the weary troop to a very fast gait. He was at that moment not more than three miles from the two, and rapidly closing up the distance.

THEY had been comfortably swathed in the hay, Peale and Jane Welch, for twenty minutes or so, listening to the crunch of bovine teeth and the stamp of hoofs, when a small side door opened and a short, very stout farmer came in with a milk bucket. Peale had only to part the hay in front of him to command a perfect view, for he was directly above the mangers.

The farmer took a pitchfork and threw down a small amount of hay for each of the three cows in the barn and then did the like operation for a pair of sleek draft animals and one scrubby looking saddle-nag. Peale cast a covetous eye on this last. With a great deal of caution he brought out a pistol and after letting the farmer milk the first cow, rose from the hay.

There was no need to issue warning. The farmer heard the noise above him and reared back quite frightened. Even before daring to cast his eyes upward to the mow, his free arm reached for a pitchfork. Then he found himself looking directly into the muzzle of a pistol.

"No racket, my friend," said Peale. He helped the girl up—at which the farmer was frankly astonished—and together they slid to the flooring.

"'Tis most extraordinarily abrupt," added Peale, "but unavoidable."

"I'm stout Tory," broke in the farmer, noting the British uniform. "If yer runnin' from the rebels, y'd better keep very low. There's been a patrol established on this road, an' it comes by every mornin' early."

"So? Well, we've had no breakfast and that milk looks—"

The farmer was willing enough to oblige his unbidden guests.

Peale took the bucket and tipped it up to the girl's mouth, smiling. "I had never expected to offer you refreshment under these circumstances, Jane."

"Is is not the unusual that people cherish?" she asked. She drank until want of breath stopped her; a drop of the milk clung to the tip of her nose. "La, I must look like the cat that forgot to clean his whiskers," she added ruefully, and began to scrub her face with a handkerchief.

She was somewhat paler than usual and the long, disagreeable ride had left its mark in her eyes. Still, she had an answering smile for him. Woman-like she began to study herself and the sight of the hay clinging to her skirt was enough to set her to a furious cleaning.

The farmer eyed the both with a species of greediness.

"I'm a stout Tory," he repeated, "but yer in dangerous country, friends. Washington's had cavalry scourin' the country a-main since Tuesday. Why, I vow I dunno. 'Tis but four odd miles to the outguards. Tain't my business what yer after, sir; but for two gold crowns I'll to't they won't find ye."

"Have you gear for that sway-back nag?" demanded Peale. Then his eyes caught sight of bridle and saddle hanging on a peg. "Yes, I see you have. I shall be forced to ask the loan of it."

"Ridin' in broad day?" exclaimed the farmer. "Oh, no, sir. 'Tis folly! Stay here till night. I'll see ye well pertected—fer two crowns, gold."

"And what if I haven't two crowns, gold?"

The farmer's countenance became much less friendly.

"How much have'ee, then?"

"Come. Enough of this barterin'. Saddle the horse and we'll be gone."

"An' wot shall I get in return?"

"You'll be paid in due time. Hurry."

The farmer dropped his milk bucket and went toward the horse with a great deal of grumbling.

"'Tis the last I'll see o't. An' no money, either. Godfrey's bells, but I like it little enough!"

Peale opened the door and the farmer, after saddling, led the mount into the foggy morning, still protesting. Though he was obviously a sharp and unscrupulous fellow, Peale could not help but pity him a little. The settlers of this debated land suffered a great deal; he made a note that the man should be recompensed for the trouble.

The fog, if anything, had thickened, and though the road was not more than twenty feet away it stood shrouded. Peale bent his ear one way and then another and called to the girl. Getting into the saddle, he reached for her arms and swung her up before him.

"What's your name, friend?"

"Tull," responded the fellow, very surly. His eyes sparkled. "I vow, I ain't goin' to consider myself bound to secrecy if the rebels should happen along. No, I ain't."

"I should say," remarked Peale, "that judging from your very amiable temper you might consider yourself bound for a very debatable region." The horse skittered away at a mincing pace and the farmer was lost in the fog. As they swung southward on the road, however, they found him bellowing. "Hey! 'Tis the wrong direction, jackanapes! Turn back!" And when he heard the hoof beats continue unchecked, he was beside himself. "So, I been gulled, eh? Oh ——!"

He was still ranging around the barnyard when Captain Tremble rode out of the fog not a quarter hour later. At the very first sight of the rank of British uniforms he related the whole story. Captain Tremble surveyed him with a blasting eye.

"Ye assume too much grief, yokel. 'Tis not that you love the royal; it's because you lost a horse. A condemned, infernal land o' snakes, this! A little solid money and y'd as soon cry for Mr. Washington's rabble. On, dragoons! We'll have our fine birds within twenty minutes!"

CHAPTER VIII

BLADE AND BLADE

PEALE traveled with as much speed as the nag would allow, which was not a great deal, considering the beast's lack of stamina and the burden it had to carry. The road had seen a great deal of traffic and was in execrable condition, deeply rutted and pock-marked throughout by other hoofs sinking to the fetlock. Over this the unfortunate animal slipped and grunted.

"We should make as good time walking, I swear," remarked Peale. "Should have requisitioned one of the man's plough horses. Less spirit in a nag I have never seen. A decent feed of grain would founder the poor brute."

"We have been fortunate," interposed the girl, clinging to his arm. "Are we not within sight of safety?"

"'Tis but a dim sight," said he, throwing an arm toward the fog. "Well, it has been a cloak to us. Without it we should never have ventured abroad."

He stopped the horse and turned in the saddle; but there was no sound he could definitely distinguish, so he resumed travel and began a calculation of the distance yet to go.

"We have covered a mile—which makes it something like three miles to Maxwell's outguards, I should judge. 'Tis a dangerous neighborhood for British horse to invade. Yet with this fog they might safely do it. I have a feeling Tremble is not far behind. The man is stubborn. Press along, Bluegrass! Now where is that sound?"

He did not pause this time, though it trembled on his ear drums, something too vague to place, and too distinctive to dismiss.

"If we are overtaken, Jane, you will drop—"

Then the troop was upon him without further warning. The fog, long useful, had played him false and blanketed the approach of the dragoons until they were within striking distance. The swash of hoofs and the clinking of furniture rose from a vague echo to a plain alarm. He stopped the horse.

"Down! Into the brush! I'll run them out and come back. If not, make your way—"

She was half across the road. The nag trembled at the haunches and sprang on as he drew his pistols and glanced behind. The van of the dragoons dashed through the swirling curtain, Tremble foremost, dark face grimly satisfied.

"Halt, sir! Sergeant, aside into that brush! The girl's taken cover!"

A pair of dragoons forged ahead of the captain, swinging their carbines clear of the leather buckets. Peale fired at the foremost and saw him fall, the rest of the troop jamming up in the road. Tremble cried like a madman—

"On, you fools!" And presently he was to the fore again.

Peale heard the girl utter a short scream of alarm and surmised that she had been overtaken. It set his pulse racing, and of a sudden he swung from the highway and dashed into the brush, determined to make some sort of stand of it. That folly lasted but an instant—long enough for the leading dragoons to follow him into the thicket—and in a very clear vision he saw that for the present he had to count the girl out. There was a dossier resting beneath his coat which came before all else.

It could not be far off to American cavalry. Tremble had put himself in a convenient trap. Jaded horses—a long distance from the British lines—

The broad chest of a dragoon presented itself; a carbine exploded in his face, so near that he tasted powder smoke. Then he caught the fellow with his second pistol, dropped it and went to his sword. In the confusion he slipped farther through the brush and for a moment had the screening fog as shelter. Again a figure penetrated it and spurred up to where his own frightened mount was pitching—a gaudy non-commissioned officer with a leathern face.

The non-com crowded abreast and slashed down with his heavy saber. Peale ducked aside and parried. Out of the dragoon's throat emerged a rusty shout. The momentum of the blade carried him off balance and, as he bent, Peale's weapon flashed through the red tunic. Again he was away while the pursuit eddied and clamored. Captain Tremble's voice rose to a frantic timbre.

The woods crashed under the fanwise spread of the dragoons. Peale turned his nag and raced for the road. Then, through the morning's mist, came the thrum of other troops advancing at the gallop. The bushes were flailed flat beside him and Tremble sprang to view, hatless, eyes bitter-bright. He, too, had caught the approaching echo and now, balanced between pursuit and retreat he came to a halt, sword poised. His men were collecting out on the road to meet this unknown troop, the sergeant's voice summoning them from all quarters. Peale drew his breath.

"Y've over-reached yourself, Tremble," said he.

"Ha!" muttered Tremble, eyes cocked toward the distance. He was about to fling himself back toward his detachment and Peale knew it. So, swinging the sorry nag around, he blocked the captain's passage.

"You came too far in search of satisfaction, sirrah," he repeated. "There's an American patrol come to investigate this hullabaloo. You're done for. Dismount and show me your metal."

The oncoming patrol swept by and without warning collided with the English dragoons. There was a shot or two and a ringing command that rang through the obscured area. Then blade beat upon blade and the lust after victory resounded high and imperious. Tremble scowled tremendously at his opponent.

"D'ye think your scurvy mounted men can beat me? No, sir! Do you surrender?"

"Dismount."

"I shall kill you quick enough," answered Tremble dropping from the saddle, itching to be with his party. "Hurry, man!"

They faced each other quite warily, circling slowly in the small glade, testing their footing on the sodden carpet of leaves, and reading such emotions as flashed to the surface of the opposite's countenance. For quite as much does victory depend on the forward spirit as on the sensitive blade; and by that token Peale knew he had come upon a redoubtable foe.

That British captain knew no fear. His was an arrogant, zealous courage. His blade whipped over the intervening space and touched Peale's weapon with a skimming sound. His knees bent and his free arm began to dance outward at his side.

"On guard, you fool! *I* have never yet missed my man."

"You will need that breath later," said Peale very grimly.

And with that they were met. Peale had selected his spot and was determined to hold it. Within the first three parries he had forgotten the resolution and was circling. Here was no bludgeoning opponent; the steel had a diabolical lightness about it. When he countered and closed he saw Tremble's nut-brown face to be utterly expressionless save for a sparkle coming through half-shut eyes and a slight flare of nostrils. The man had well learned his lesson; he was a bundle of muscle, a storehouse of swift energy. Peale, stiffening his defense, withstood a slashing attack and drove home his point. He had broken up that advance. On retreating he found his vision obscured; there was blood dripping down his brow.

"Do you give?" demanded Tremble. "I most assuredly will kill you and I'd rather have the pleasure—ah, sir, take *care!*—of seeing you hang."

It was not braggadocio. The man was serenely confident. On that confidence he harried Peale mercilessly around the glade, flicking away the other's guard with careless effort. The American, worn down by twenty hours of constant travel, began to feel a treacherous weight steal along his shoulder and into his fingers.

That would never do! He could afford no handicaps with this master of the duello. Spurred by the knowledge of his weakness, he began to throw away caution. He closed. The glade rang with the sharp exchange. Of a sudden the gallant captain, unmindful of his slippery footing, made a long thrust and went down on a knee.

Peale sprang back and dropped the point of his weapon, waiting.

It was a natural gesture, yet it came so much as a surprize to Tremble that he forebore rising for a second.

"Gallant, eh?" he snarled. "Whyn't ye take advantage?"

"Up!"

"Ah, ye think ye need no advantage?"

And thereupon Tremble lost a measure of his confidence, never to regain it. The man was unafraid! He rose and assumed a more cautious posture. Thus Peale brought the battle to him and time after time was beaten away. The captain never moved a step. There was an endless repetition of movement. In darted the American's blade, to be parried and thrown out. This was novice work! And the stealthy weight was tricking Peale. He was excessively hot and somewhat blurred of vision. He saw Tremble standing so sure and so solid. There must be an end of this!

The glade rang again, the steel snarled. Peale towered over his man. The captain broke—and broke again. Peale filled his lungs and sent a long, rollicking cry over Tremble's head and drove. The steel whined. One blade wavered uncertainly—and was down. Down! Home, point!

"Touch," said Tremble, imperturbably. He stood like a statue. "A touch for Mr. Peale."

Down some distance in the road the fight lost its tenor and fell to a low note. A horse galloped toward the glade. Peale shook the persistent sweat out of his eyes and tried to draw a full breath. He was winded, useless of shoulder. He could not have lifted his weapon horizontal for all the mortal danger in the world. But there was no need to. Tremble's face became quite saturnine and his legs failed him. Down he went in a heap. There was one burst of energy left in him and he used it characteristically. Up came arm and sword and he flung the blade straight at Peale, then fell back dead. The weapon missed its mark and dropped harmlessly on the leaf mold.

The leaves shivered and a ruddy youth burst through, in the saddle, and whirled around to keep from riding over Peale.

"Cornered, sir! What the ——?"

"Peale—of Maxwell's brigade, Lieutenant," explained the victor, shaking his head wearily. There was a tugging at his elbow and unexpectedly he found himself resting on the girl's shoulder, quite glad to have the support. His muscles quivered.

"——!" exclaimed the patrol lieutenant. "It *must* have been a sight!"

"The best swordsman," said Peale simply, "lost. My shout, I believe, took him off guard. Have you routed the party?"

"Somewhat!" said the lieutenant energetically.

"Pick us up, then," said Peale. "I

bear despatches for General Maxwell. The lady must find warm shelter very soon or she'll take cold."

"If I may observe," said the officer, "y've a nasty cut there."

"Come, no delay!"

The patrol leader rode to the highway and began to collect his men. From some particular source the girl had gotten a piece of cloth and wrapped it around Peale's head.

"Infernal headache the captain bequeathed me," said he. "My lady, you said you had folks around here. I shall have the pleasure of ordering these men to escort you there."

"To the nearest tavern then."

"But your folks—"

"I have no folks. Neither here nor elsewhere."

His head cleared somewhat; he found himself looking at a very bedraggled girl whose eyes were at this moment sober and resigned. Her courage seemed to have deserted her. In truth, she was forlorn. And she answered his inspection with a very meek explanation.

"'Twas fiction I told you in New York. But I feared you would not care to be bothered with taking me if I said it elsewise. I am very grateful, Mr. Peale. To the first tavern, then, and I shall no longer be a burden—"

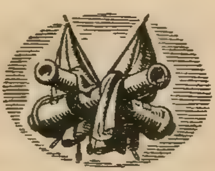
"Oh, ——," exclaimed the harassed young man, entirely to himself. "*That's* an ill-sounding reason." He put a muddy finger under her chin. "After all's passed am I to be thrown over like a worn shoe? Look you, Jane—there's a chaplain in the brigade."

"Take me to the first tavern sir! La, I'd not have you askin' me while I looked like this! I'd think it was marriage out of pity!"

He led her to the road and in a moment both were riding south toward the American lines. He had been rebuffed, undoubtedly; but on a second glance he knew he had won another victory. He leaned over and spoke in a humble subdued tone.

"I shall send you home to my mother, then."

"Jeffry, no. It's not in me to be so far away. I follow you as close as fortune will let me. Do not other officers' ladies make their homes on the edge of the camp?"



The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all Meeting-Place *for* Readers, Writers and Adventurers

DON'T worry. We aren't going to start running question and answer games, or cross-word puzzles, or any of the other devices for making your mental processes loop the loop. What we print below from Harold Lamb is just to show you how far we could go if once we got started. Rather, how far the members of our writers' brigade could go. Needless to say, we didn't accept Mr. Lamb's wager.

Puzzle questionnaires seem to be in vogue. You have a large and able staff of A. A. editors, but do you realize what your authors have to face?

I'll make you a fair wager. Here are some of the questions your readers put up to me in the last year. If any editor of *Adventure's* staff can answer these a hundred per cent within twenty-four hours of reading them, I'll stake the staff to a dinner at Delmonico's—if it's still extant—on my next trip to New York. Otherwise, *Adventure* stakes me to a dinner.

Here goes—

1. Since the historians place Ophir in four places at once, where was it?

2. What does paladin mean? Will you help us with a "short, romatic description of the term 'Paladin' written with a historical point of view, in such a way as to draw a close parallel to our modern use of this designation?"

3. Did all the Huns and Khitans use the same kind of sabres?

4. Do Chinamen call their country China, and if not, why do we?

5. Where do we get the name Pharaoh, and Ptolemy and Tutankhamen, and how do we come by Hammurabi and Sargon and Ur?

6. Where was Sheba?

7. Who won the battle of Liegnitz, the Mongols or Europeans?

8. Where was that Ind-Chinese mart with the 40 columns, and was it before or after Christ?

9. In that great battle (between Mongols and Tangstand) on the frozen Hoang-ho, ibn Athir says 300,000 men were slain. Is this an exaggeration?

10. Were those wild fishermen in Gedrosia wild in 1000 B. C.?

Note, I've played fair. These are not at all fool questions but from readers who want to know, and who were answered. For instance, the "wild fishermen" evidently are the savage *Icthyophagi*, or fish-eating tribes, on the coast of Gedrosia, at the edge of the desert crossed by Alexander. In the case of ibn Athir, I happened to have read the original chronicle which says something like— "It is well known among Mongols that among every hundred thousand slain after a battle, you will find one man (body) standing on his head. Here, three were counted standing on their heads." As I recall the account it was Rashid, not ibn Athir, though ibn Athir might have quoted from Rashid.

Who gets the dinner?—Harold Lamb.

Note, again. It's not a case of the worm turning, this letter. These questions from your readers often bring up interesting subjects. They are helpful. *Only*, it's a big job to be called on to go outside your own subjects and answer queries on all Asia from B. C. 1000 to date.

SOMETHING from Post Sargent in connection with his article in this issue.

The story of Jean Louis seems to me a notable one. My reasons I have set forth briefly in the story itself. I know of no single combat in history, or the history of literature, since the Middle Ages, that compares in its class with that of Jean Louis and the fifteen Italian swordsmen. So many things are involved. The lowly birth of the great swordsman; his splendid character; the stirring times in which his adventure took place; the contribution he made to the Napoleonic campaigns; the paradox of the century's most famous swordsman combating and banishing the practise of dueling.

Readers of our Camp-Fire who collectively seem to have encyclopedic knowledge on tap for every occasion may, of course, know of some equally good exploit in dueling in modern times. I doubt that anyone can duplicate the exploit *plus* the circumstances.

Naturally, there are very many fine incidents worth telling in the history of dueling. Each incident has its special interest. One thinks at once of the duel that Sheridan, celebrated actor, dramatist and statesman—of *The School for Scandal* fame—had with Captain Matthews. A most ferocious fight. Firing their pistols without effect, they went at it with swords that broke at the first onset. Tumbling to the ground, they continued their fight, until separated, Richard Sheridan being carried from the field with part of his opponent's weapon still sticking through his ear, his body bruised and covered with blood, and his face hammered to a jelly by Matthews' sword hilt. One of the most versatile men that ever lived. Yet—not an admirable character, taken all in all.

Other notable Irishmen of modern times—O'Connell, Curran, McNamara, Castlereagh, O'Brien, Fitzgibbon, Grattan, Barrington—like their compatriot Sheridan, have each contributed a thrill, or two, or a dozen, because of their skill with the sword. Most of them carried into practise the advice of Dean Hutchinson of Trinity College, Dublin, who followed his own advice at times. When consulted by a law student concerning his legal studies, Hutchinson counseled the young man to buy a brace of pistols and learn how to use them. "They will get you along faster than Fearne or Blackstone," was his concluding remark. An Irish wag explained that this "was teaching the young idea how to shoot with a vengeance."

In Ireland, it would seem, these duels—bloody and ferocious, often—were not seldom without their humor. Curran, great orator and patriot, had more than one affair. Fighting Peter Burrowes, he was requested by the latter's second to allow his principal, who was in very feeble condition, to lean against a milestone, during the interchange of shots. "Gladly, gladly," returned Curran, with a twinkle in his eye. "Provided I am allowed to lean against the next milestone."

Sir Jonah Barrington (1760-1834), himself a noted duelist, incidentally Judge of the High Court of Admiralty in Ireland, once wrote a book: "Personal Sketches of His Own Times." He devoted two chapters to Irish dueling. One of the delightful statements that caught this writer's eye was the following: "Single combat was formerly a very prevalent and favorite mode of administering justice in Ireland; and not being considered so *brutal* as bull-fights, or other beastly amusements of that nature, it was authorized by law, and frequently performed before the high authorities and their ladies—bishops, judges, and other persons of high office honoring the spectacle with their presence." Whereupon the present writer bethought himself of a certain argument held with a cultured Spanish gentleman years ago in Madrid. "What!" said my Spaniard, in indignant protest. "You really mean to compare bull-fighting with your *brutal* game of football?"

Autres temps, autres moeurs! Somewhere, I am convinced, can be found a people who consider hop-scotch and tiddle-de-winks absolutely *brutal* compared to their own pastime of, say, carving their initials on their playmate's epidermis. Sort of jungle crossword puzzle, with rules against snicking too deep, or tickling brutally.

The history of dueling in Germany is full of interesting incidents. In general it is known that up to just before the World War it was a common custom among the university students. The grim humor of Frederick the Great in his fight to abolish the custom comes to mind in this connection. Despite Frederick's prohibition a certain officer made bold to petition the king for permission to fight with a brother officer. Frederick gave his consent with suspicious readiness, with the proviso, however, that he be notified of the time and place of the duel. Which was done. When the adversaries and their seconds repaired to the appointed place, they found Frederick there ahead of them. Also a gallows that had been newly erected.

Appealed to to explain the disturbing phenomenon, portent, or sign of royal humor, Frederick replied: "It means, sir, that I intend to witness your combat until one of you has killed the other according to your arrangement, and contrary to my decree. Then I will hang the survivor." It is perhaps unnecessary to add that all bets were declared off. The death rate—from dueling—dropped alarmingly thereafter for a number of years.

The duels of historical significance in America, such as that of Hamilton and Burr, are a matter of primary school knowledge. Talented writers have made the most of such, as of the duels during the frontier days. Jesus Garcia and Gus Davis in New Mexico; Curly Bill, Russian Bill, Sandy King, Poker Bill in the West—sheriffs and "bad men"—each with notched pistol; Graham and Yank Maguire in San Francisco; etc., etc.

Duels in the dark, duels by moonlight, duels with strange weapons are noted by the thousands in the annals of all nations since the Middle Ages. Tragedy and human degradation were their usual accompaniment, though some of them never went beyond pathos, bathos or humor. Some, even—and your writer, who detests more than most the senseless shedding of blood, hates to admit it—some, even, rose to great heights of patriotism and self-sacrifice. Among these I place Jean Louis.

Perhaps most of us—until driven by anger to throw overboard our philosophic calmness—would like almost all impending duels to end like the following.

"You smell like a goat," said St. Foix to an officer of the King's Guard one day.

"Sir," exclaimed the furious officer, drawing his sword. "Unsheath at once, or eat your words." "Pish! Put up your sword, you foolish fellow," said the famous duellist, whose tongue was forever leading him into scrapes—and out. "Put up your sword, for if you kill me you will not smell any better, and if I kill you, you will smell a whole lot worse."—Post Sargent.

ONE OF you who owned an old sextant suspected that it had a history. Mention was made in Camp-Fire—and here is the history, sent in by the grandson of the original owner.

My attention was attracted to a letter from Mr. G. L. Hight in Camp-Fire. This *article* mentioned an old sextant case on which several marks were inscribed and he was anxious to have some old seaman tell him what they meant. My special attention was drawn to name Enoch Train as my grandfather Henry Sylvanus Rich was master of the *Enoch Train*. The following might be of interest in connection with this article.

My great grandfather Captain Sylvanus Rich and his son, my grandfather Captain Henry Sylvanus Rich were both sea captains when the sea demanded a great deal more in the sailor line than at the present time. Captain Henry Sylvanus Rich was born in North Bucksport, Maine, March 29, 1821 and died in Chelsea, Massachusetts, February 15, 1872. He first went fishing on the Grand Banks with Captain Samuel Nickerson. He then was promoted through the various seaman grades on the Ship *Antioch* which was commanded by Captain Joseph Wescott. He was Captain of the following: *Bark Lucia Field* 1845 to 1850, *Ship John H. Jarvis* 1851 to 1854, *Ship Enoch Train* 1854 to 1858, *Ship John H. Jarvis* 1858 to 1861. (This ship was captured off the Passes of the Mississippi by the Confederates and taken to New Orleans. Grandfather's personal effects were stored there until New Orleans was captured by Admiral Farragut and then sent to his home at Chelsea, Massachusetts.) He reassumed command of the *Ship John H. Jarvis* in 1862 and retained command until 1865. He then took over the *Ship Wellfleet* which was afterwards sold at Hamburg, Germany and name changed to *Senator Weber*. (We have a large oil painting of the last named ship at my father's home in Malden, Mass.)

My great grandmother Rich (Susan Hincks) was a sister of Hannah Nickerson (Hincks) who was the wife of Captain Samuel Nickerson mentioned above. Captain Samuel Nickerson's son Isaac was the father of Thomas Nickerson of Athens, Georgia. Thomas Nickerson's daughter married Mr. G. L. Hight of Rome, Georgia who wrote the letter requesting information regarding the old sextant case.

My grandfather Henry Sylvanus Rich died in Chelsea, Massachusetts on February 15, 1872. He had about 1865 retired from the deep-sea sailing and commanded one of the Boston and Bangor Steamship Company steamers. On one of the trips he contracted pneumonia during a severe storm while saving one of his pilots.

When he died his widow, grandmother Rich, turned over all of his personal nautical instruments over to Isaac Nickerson. The sextant and sextant case were among these nautical instruments and I have endeavored to locate them for years without success until the article appeared in the *Adventure*.

When I saw the article I wrote to my father, Thomas Sylvanus Rich of Malden, Massachusetts and to Mr. Hight. Mr. Hight stated in his letter of reply as follows: "This sextant was found in the home of Mr. Isaac Nickerson, who died some years ago, and was survived by his wife for many years. His wife's maiden name was Irene Nash. After her death, this sextant was among her effects, and was given to me by Mr. T. H. Nickerson, her son." This data together with that received from my father proved that the old sextant and sextant case had been my Grandfather Rich's.

It might be of interest to state that I have in my possession the sextant made by Spencer, Browning & Rast of London for my great grandfather Rich. There is an ivory plate on this sextant on which is inscribed "For Sylvanus Rich, Jr., 1816." I have also the original ship's flag used by my Grandfather Rich on the *Ship Wellfleet* and his personal diary written by him during the period 1847 to 1854. This diary is in long hand and is illustrated with watercolor drawings of instances and places visited by him. There is a long article on Riga as well as many other places he visited during the voyages during that period. The hand writing is beautifully done and is almost as fine as steel engraving even after over seventy-five years.

It is a source of great gratification to me that I have been able through *Adventure* to know that the sextant is in good hands and where it will be appreciated and this instance indicates what a wonderful assistance Camp-Fire is to all who read *Adventure* from "Kiver to Kiver". I have been a reader of *Adventure* since the first number and the Camp-Fire is one of the first if not the first, part read by me.

Although I am not a sailor I still have the inborn love of the sea and connected therewith which has, I believed, been passed down to me in the Rich blood and I have a dry-land sailor's inclination of collecting books and pictures of the old ships and I spend much of my available reading time in studying the various publications on the construction of ship models. It is a source of great enjoyment to me and has been the means of passing many otherwise dull hours. I have constructed mentally many models but I am waiting for the time to come when I can construct a model of one of my Great Grandfather's or Grandmother's ships without fear of being called a greenhorn by some of the nautical experts. There are too many models being constructed at this time that look more like Noah's Ark than what they are supposed to represent.

My great grandfather Rich commanded the Schooner *Polly* which was constructed in 1805 and on which a bronze plate was placed by the National Society of the United States Daughters of 1812 of New York several years ago. He also commanded the Brig *Richard Adams*, the Ship *St. Cloud* and Ship *St. Leon*. Incidentally he retired from the sea when he was thirty-five years of age and built a home in Bangor Maine in 1828. This house is still standing on the corner of Essex and State Streets with the interiors practically the same as when constructed.

I have enjoyed very much the stories by Bill Adams, Captain Dingle and others who have sailed and sailored in the old days of wooden ships and iron men and when I reach the retirement age in the Army I plan to settle on the tip end of Cape Cod—from where my ancestors moved to Maine in 1798—from where I can see the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Massachusetts Bay on the other and from where I can see the sailing crafts pass en route to the Seven Seas. If at any time after I settle down in retirement I can have some old dyed in the wool deep sea sailor say of me, "His feet might be on the shore but his heart is on the sea," I will feel that my sailor ancestors will hear and appreciate that although I have crossed the Equator in an Army Transport I have tried to live up to the traditions of the old Maine Families that one of them must love and follow the sea.—Albert T. Rich.

P. S. I might state here as an article of interest the reason why my father did not adopt the sea as a profession. When he was about the age when all boys want to follow the sea he was taken on a trip to Hamburg by his father. His father realizing that the days of the sailing vessels were passing gave him the real sailor apprentice work of shining brass, etc., during the entire trip. At the end of the trip he decided that a sailor's life did not consist wholly of standing on the deck and watching others do the work but that it took years of experience before one could command wooden ships and iron men. He came home on a liner and since my birth has turned over to me his love for the sea which he never was able to follow.—A. T. R.

HE WAS the hero of the first adventure story and we are still arguing about him. By the way, *was* "Robinson Crusoe" the first adventure story? If it wasn't, what was?

When I opened the April 1st *Adventure* and saw the article "A Voluntary Crusoe," I leaped upon it with the fiendish eagerness of a hungry wolf. My eye lighted upon the words "*Robinson Crusoe*" and "Juan Fernandez in the South Pacific Ocean" and I chortled in glee. "Just what I expected!" crowed I. "Ah!"

But alas, the author does not definitely state that Defoe placed poor old Robinson Crusoe on Fernandez; he merely intimates it; thus I am robbed of the opportunity to do a little sharpshooting on my own account. In other words I am thwarted by the indefinitely of the connection between *Crusoe* and the island; I can tie neither Mr. Perkins nor the ship's doctor down to having made a positive statement.

Just the same, I am going to give myself the pleasure of assuming that in the opinion of the writer of the document Defoe actually used Fernandez as the scene of his story. And besides, I have heard and read that belief so many times that I feel called upon to correct it, or at least to add my mite to the corrections that have already been put forward by others; and, I think, Camp-Fire is the place for it—if it hasn't already appeared there; if it has, just place this carefully in the handiest waste basket.

Crusoe was not shipwrecked on the island of Juan Fernandez, in the South Pacific. He set sail from Brazil on the *east* coast of South America, for Africa; Fernandez, then, was astern, and not only astern, but on the other side of the continent of South America ". . . we set sail" (from Brazil, where *Crusoe* has a plantation) "standing away to the northward upon our own coasts, with design to stretch over for the north African coast. . . . About the twelfth day, the weather abating a little, the master made an observation as well he could, and found that he was in about eleven degrees of north latitude . . . so that he found he was gotten upon the coast of Guiana. . . ." And Guiana, of course, is in northeast South America; Crusoe was in the Atlantic, and Fernandez was, by the shortest route, several thousand miles away. I'll say here, in parenthesis, that Defoe's story has gone through so many editions and been edited so variously that phrases and words and even names do not always agree; they all agree in context, however. Some of the quotations I use here are taken from a volume at hand; others from notes made some years ago from another edition by another publisher; I mention this so that no one will accuse me of man-handling the evidence should he find that my wording disagrees with that of a copy he might have; all versions that I have seen agree geographically.

All right; they are off the *northeast* coast of South America, the ship is leaking and things look bad; so bad, in fact, that the ship's captain decides to make for the nearest land. That ought to tell us something.

". . . he" (the captain) "was for going directly back to the coast of Brazil." But *Crusoe* was "positively against that" and "we resolved to stand away for Barbadoes. . . ." Still in the Atlantic, you see. "With this design we changed our course, in order to reach some of our English islands; but . . . a second storm came upon us. . . ."

In the very next paragraph the ship runs upon, in this copy of the book, "a sand," in another it is "rocks," and another, "a rock." Anyway, they run upon something, with the final result that Crusoe, after a swim through the mountainous waves, finds himself upon the island, the only man saved of all that crew. This, then, puts him upon an island north of Guiana, or in the Caribbean Sea; we assume that he did not swim south into the South Atlantic, round Cape Horn and swim north in the South Pacific to Juan Fernandez, off the coast of Chili. We assume that.

The foregoing proof is irrefutable. And there is more of the same. For instance, *Crusoe* gives the latitude as 11 North; the island of Tobago reaches from 11 north to 11:20 north. Tobago was Crusoe's island.

Then comes friend Friday, who, after they become acquainted, points out land from a high hill on the southern end of the island, and names it Trinidad; this in itself is positive proof that the island was not Fernandez. Again, *Crusoe* describes the Indians who visit him; his description is of Carib Indians, who at that time inhabited the Southern Caribbees. Friday himself was a Carib; most likely what is known as a Red Carib—that is, one with a mixture of Spanish or Portuguese blood: He states that Friday's hair was long and black and not woolly; that he had something of the European in his countenance; that his forehead was high and large, and that the color of his skin was not black, but "very tawny." A Red Carib, it would seem; and Crusoe's description of the other Indians who visit the island at various times points also to the Caribbees; though there are one or two details that don't quite jibe, they are of no consequence when the weight of evidence is considered.

The climatological descriptions are all of Tobago, and he describes the local winds and currents quite specifically; here, for instance, he mentions "the great Draught and Reflux of the mighty River Oroonoque (Orinoco), in the *Mouth or Gulph of which our island lays*. And the Land which I perceiv'd was the great Island of Trinidad, on the north Point of the Mouth of the River."

If the foregoing isn't conclusive proof, then conclusive proof on anything is impossible. Defoe, through his mouthpiece Crusoe, does not name the island, but he does much better; he describes its exact location—northwest of Guiana, off the coast of Venezuela and in the Orinoco current, and within sight of Trinidad, which is about twenty miles from Tobago. With such clear and positive evidence that Crusoe's island was Tobago, it is hard to understand why it is so generally believed to be Juan Fernandez, in another ocean. The only possible explanation for this erroneous belief is that Selkirk, who furnished the idea and the material for the story, was himself marooned on Fernandez, though it is difficult to understand how any reader could believe Crusoe's island to be Fernandez when he himself repeatedly gives its geographical location, placing it in the Caribbean.

And still we read the statement over and over, by reputable writers and in first-class publications, that Crusoe's island was Juan Fernandez. It is one of those erroneous beliefs that will live forever, despite any amount of refutation and correction; it belongs in the class with the fable of Washington and the cherry-tree, the wreck of the *Hesperus*, Lincoln's reading the Bible to his son, the ringing of the Liberty Bell by the gray old caretaker when the fair-haired boy signaled that the Declaration had been signed, and many, many others. These beliefs go on and on—JOHN WEBB.

MORE remarks about gagging from a Canadian comrade who has had personal experience.

If you will permit me to raise my voice at Camp-Fire I might give a personal experience in gagging, not one which happened to me but which I caused to happen to some one else. I have knocked about a bit but this is the only time I ever saw the job done, and I can assure your friend Mr. Stebbings that it worked most efficiently.

Years ago, in prep school, some one in the Upper Fifth tried to grow a misplaced eyebrow, and the Sixth decided to remove it. "Buster" (the criminal) was a teacher's pet, so we overhauled him after a long stern-chase and operated in the woodworking shop. I sat on his chest, and tried to gag him with a handkerchief between his teeth, holding the ends (and his head) down on the bench. He groaned horribly, and we feared the head would hear, so I called for a second handkerchief. I then stuffed the first well into his jaws and put the second in place on top using it like a snaffle and holding the ends down hard. You may believe me that all he could do was try to sneeze, because the soft cotton prevented any vibration escaping by his mouth. Try it on the next agent, when he tries to sell you some biography or a new life policy. Towels are even better than napkins and both beat handkerchiefs hollow.—H. WYATT JOHNSTON.

EDWARD L. McKENNA whose story in this issue is the third of his that we have published, arises to apologize for being a college professor. He professes at a good college, though. I went there myself, and I know.

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

I am thirty-three years old, was born in Brooklyn and have been a college teacher since I was twenty.

In extenuation of this I can offer very little in the summer-time; I support myself by keeping books, or by peddling, or by manual labor. I have worn out as many blue chambray shirts as the average workingman has, and I don't mean by working in the garden either. I told my shipmates during the War that I was a milkman in civil life as I did not wish to be thrown off the ship. And my exec. offered me a job on his tug-boat when the War was over. I didn't take it, but I am proud of the offer.

I am not trying to say that I am a hard, tough citizen in spite of my business. It is only that so many people believe a college professor must be either a little pathetic or like something out of the funny papers. As a matter of fact, no business is more pleasant than ours, and if the rest of the world laughs at us, well, we have our own private little jokes too. Few of us are starving to death, and in this line, as in most others, the man who is not making a living has himself to blame.

And nobody who reads my stuff will think so little of my school as to believe that I teach English. I don't.—EDWARD L. McKENNA.

ASK *Adventure*

For *free information* and *services* you can't get elsewhere

China

AT PRESENT not the best place in the world for a white man to be, nor a very likely one to seek one's fortune.

Request:—"I am desirous of taking up a position in China in any capacity whatsoever providing it is in keeping with the prestige of the white man.

At present I am building a road into the interior of New Guinea for an oil company which is almost completed.

I am an ex-Naval man, having served seven years in the Navy from whence I came to German New Guinea as plantation manager for 3 years, leaving that position to build the road on which I am working at present; I can furnish good credentials.

I have handled large numbers of native labor and a few Chinese of the Coolie type found here for the past four years.

If you could let me know of any positions vacant or becoming vacant in China which you think would suit me I would be very much obliged if you would let me know of them; also the prospects of the newcomer to China."—HAROLD B. GANNEN, Madang, New Guinea.

Reply, by Mr. Twomey—You have probably read about the chaotic conditions that exist in North China today and I am very much afraid that your chances of securing a position here are very remote. The prestige of the white man is almost a thing of the past in China, and any one who comes to China with the view of upholding that prestige is foredoomed to failure.

Your experience in handling Chinese labor would not benefit you in North China. The Chinese that you know are from South China. The language spoken by the Southern Chinese is entirely different from that spoken in the north, and even if you speak the southern language fluently you could not make yourself understood in the north.

There are simply hundreds of Russian refugees in North China. Nearly all of them speak Chinese fluently and they will work for a salary that you could not accept. In fact, you could not live on the salary.

Roads as we know them do not exist in China. In a few places there are fairly good streets and roads but these are constructed by the authorities of the various foreign concessions and you would have no chance to secure a position with any of these municipalities except the British Municipal Councils in the different Chinese cities that have British concessions. The chances here are slim, because there are many good Britishers looking for jobs in China and the majority of them speak Chinese. You might write to the Secretary of the Municipal Council at Shanghai and apply for a position, but as I have stated, there are many men in Shanghai looking for jobs.

The many civil wars that have occurred in China in the past few years have completely upset things all over the country. Business is bad and the firms in business here are retrenching where ever possible. Many firms are going bankrupt and all of them are having hard times keeping alive.

If you are a qualified ship's officer you might write to Butterfield and Swire, Shanghai, or to Jardine, Matheson and Co., Shanghai, and apply for a position on one of their river boats. They have occasional vacancies, but then there is the fact that you are not on the ground and when a vacancy occurs it is usually filled very promptly.

I am inclined to take a pessimistic view about conditions in China. I believe that it will be several years before conditions become settled, and that after conditions do become settled they will never be what they used to be.

The Chinese are becoming more alert to Western ways and this increases competition. Chinese now fill, at lower salaries, many positions formerly filled by foreigners. As the number of educated Chinese increases this condition will grow worse.

I am sorry that I am unable to encourage your desire to come to China but I would strongly advise you not to do so. One of my good friends, a native of Australia, was talking to me a few days ago and planning to go to New Guinea, believing that conditions there are better than in China.

Oriental Bows

A WEAPON made mostly of horn—and sometimes reflexed to the shape of a pretzel.

Request:—"I like shooting with bow and arrow but do not like the longbow. Can you give me any information as how to make one of the short convex bows like the Mongols and Saracens were using? Can you recommend any books on this subject? Do you know if it is possible to secure one of these bows?

I was born in Austria on the blue Danube and as you probably know there is no hunting for the average man; the country is full of hunting preserves belonging to the nobility. I used to poach quite a bit, shot my first deer when I was fourteen. Bow and arrow. Bow made of umbrella stays. Later I had the good fortune to shoot a Turkish bow, captured before Vienna in the fifteenth century; as far as I can remember, this bow was bent in rather strongly on the ends, about 90 lbs. pull, made of some kind of horn and shot very accurate at long distances."—Leo Busch, Seattle, Wash.

Reply, by Mr. Earl B. Powell—The Oriental bows you mention were made either by building up strips of horn on the belly side of a sliver of wood, or else by making them out of two halves of a pair of horns which were usually backed with sinew or rawhide, both methods being used in making up the horn composite bow. This was flat in cross-section and strongly reflexed, sometimes being in the shape of a letter C and even to a pretzel shape, the horn was steamed so that it would be easy to work, and then straightened out and built up either layer by layer or else, if from a big pair of horns, was joined and backed.

I do not know of any books on the subject that could be obtained. You can get a little information from Elmer's book, "Archery," for sale by Penn Publishing Co., Philadelphia, Pa. I don't know where to get one of these bows. I would like to get one of them myself if possible.

American Indian Soldiers

THEY make fine soldiers, are excellent athletes, but often desert, due to love of personal freedom inherited from their forebears.

Request:—"Can you tell me if the War Department has published any pamphlets or leaflets or issued any data at all on the American Indian soldiers in the World War? I have been informed that such is the case, yet some time since I wrote to the adjutant general at Washington and was informed that no particular data had been compiled aside from general notations on the estimated number of Indians serving in the U. S. forces, no returns by States or reservations of Indians enlisted or of casualties on the other side.

The officer who answered my letter did it courteously enough in the usual military manner and referred me to the Indian bureau, which gracious tape-wrapped division of the Government informed me the members had been too busy to check up and no publications had been issued. Now I have been informed that some such publications have been issued at Washington. I do not doubt that they have, *but* to whom must I write to get through the three lines of wire with loose wire and trip wire in front to obtain this material?

I like to keep up to date on all matters concerning the Indian and would certainly like to have some items on his service during the last scrimmage. I know he was there—two full-blooded Sioux in my outfit, Co. B 20th Reg. Inf: one was Kills First; the other Yellow Head—so they were listed on the payroll—and I know that the first old-time victory dance held by any divisions of the Dakota tribe since the triumphant Sioux danced the hair of Custer's yellow legs was given November 30 near Fort Yates, North Dakota, in 1918, and this latter dance was in honor of the homecoming of the victorious Sioux boys returning from France. Some difference after forty-odd years!"—Arthur Woodward, New York, N. Y.

Reply, by Lieut. Townsend—I have seen nothing published by the War Department with reference to American Indian soldiers in the World War. I doubt if any separate pamphlets or reports have been published on this subject, mainly because the War Department has published so little on the World War as yet. Of course something may have been published either separately or in connection with some other matter. If so I hope to be able to locate it for you through a friend who is on duty in the War Department. In the event you wish to follow up the matter directly I would suggest writing to either or both of the following:

Historical Section, The General Staff, War Department, Washington, D. C.
The Librarian, The Army War College, Washington, D. C.

Doubtlessly you have tried all the usual sources, including the Librarian of the Congressional Library and the Superintendent of Documents. If not I would suggest that you write them as they are familiar not only with the War Department publications but the publications of all governmental departments and it is possible that the publications of which you have heard were issued by some other agency than the War Department.

While we are on the subject of Indians you may be interested to know that out here in the Northwest we get a good many Indians in the army in peace time. For the most part they make very good soldiers. I have no statistics but my observation is that a comparatively small percentage make non-commissioned officer material. I should add, however, that I have seen some Indians make excellent non-commissioned officers. In fact one of the best sergeants in the Third Infantry at present is an Indian. A number of them are among the best athletes in the regiment. There is a fairly large desertion rate among them but I suppose that this can be reasonably attributed to the love of personal freedom which the young Indian of today inherits from his forebears. Nearly all of our Indians are of the Sioux or Objibway tribes. We have found that it is best not to mix tribes in the same company. The old racial antipathies die hard.

Mozambique

WHERE the mercury often glints at the 116 mark, in the shade, and the white man's diet had better include plenty of quinine, but where one can have a pretty good time just the same.

Request:—"Two of us are planning to spend the next three or four years in tropical Africa somewhere, and would like to get some dope on your section concerning living conditions, etc., of Mozambique. We've chosen this part of Africa because both of us have a fair knowledge of Portuguese. We're not going connected with any commercial enterprise, nor are we seeking any particular line of employment when we get there. Our idea is to go there, loaf around, stay in the towns or near them, and pick up what we can in the way of amusements and experiences and try to collect as complete a knowledge of that part of the continent as we can. If you would answer these questions we would appreciate your kindness very much.

1. Is the climate healthy or does one have to guard against malaria etc. by taking quinine or other drug daily?

2. Do you think the climate healthier there than in Angola? We don't mind the heat but want to avoid the kind of place where a man is sure to be sent home in a wooden overcoat after he has been there a few months?

3. What sort of a berg is Mozambique? Pioneer town or partially civilized?

4. What is the social life (if any) like? What class of people? Commercial men? Adventurers? Missionaries or what? Which predominate? Any English speaking people?

5. Could two of us live with half-way decent surroundings on four thousand bucks a year?

6. Any amusements thereabouts? Hunting? Boating, etc.? Any difficulty getting in the country?

What we want to know is what chance have a couple of us got of going there, doing a couple of years, and managing to live without undue deprivations, and at the same time getting a little fun along with it. Any extra information you can give would be highly appreciated."—G. H., Washington, D. C.

Reply, by Mr. R. G. Waring:—Your contemplated visit to Portuguese East Africa, situated as you are with a fair knowledge of Portuguese, and capital at your command, should prove very enjoyable to you.

1. The proper observance of the ordinary rules of Tropical hygiene, and moderation in all things, will enable you to spend two years there without any serious ill effects. Malaria of course is prevalent throughout the Colony, and the chances are that sooner or later you would get an attack of it, no matter how careful you are. I was there for a year before my first attack.

2. The general rule for white men going out there is to start taking a 2 grain capsule of quinine daily, starting when in sight of the coast. The climate anywhere on the east coast is healthier than the west. I do know that you would find a "wooden overcoat" much quicker on the west coast.

3. I spent most of my two years within 80 miles of the coral island of Mozambique. The town itself, is originally Arab, and was founded some 400 years ago. Its population today is mostly Arab and Indian, with a few Portuguese and Germans.

The town is considered very unhealthy, and is probably one of the hottest places in Portuguese East, the thermometer often reaching 116 in the shade.

4. You will find plenty of English-speaking people in Lourenço Marques and Beira, the two largest towns. The leading merchants of these places are British, and the better class of hotel, such as the Savoy of Beira, is run by Englishmen.

5. I would say that you could have a pretty good time on four thousand a year.

6. You can get all the hunting you want—licenses varying according to the game you are after.

You will have no difficulty in getting into the country, with the money you can command.

I would advise you on arrival at Lourenço Marques, to call on the Consul of the United States. I know he would only be too glad to give you any advice and information you might need.

I am enclosing some pamphlets covering Portuguese East Africa in general, which I trust will be of some use to you.

If at any time you got tired of the colony, it would be an easy matter for you to run into the Orange Free State, and thence to Johannesburg, all by rail from Lourenço Marques, a total distance of around 450 miles. Then again there are coastwise boats making weekly trips to Inhambane, Bartholomew Dias, Beira, Quellimane, Angoche, Ibo and Mozambique. If you are used to early breakfast you will sure get an appetite up at the time breakfast is announced. The first meal served on these boats is between 11 and 11:30 A.M.

Sestertius

THESE came from little clay pots dug up in Palestine by some Englishmen, and bear the likeness of the foster-father of the great philosopher-emperor, Marcus Aurelius.

Request:—"I enclose a rubbing of a coin I picked up during the war in a rather curious way and I would like to have any information you could give me on it, such as:

Year of issue? What it was called? Approximate value today, etc?

If I remember correctly, Antoninus was called the "Beloved" and was best liked of all the Roman Emperors.

The rubbings are not very distinct but the inscription around the edge is as follows:

Antoninus Aug Pius, PPTRPCOSIUM (?)

I picked this coin up during the late war; was shooting craps with a bunch of Englishmen who had just returned from Palestine. Each one had one of these coins; they said they were digging for a latrine and found six little clay pots and each pot had a coin in it. They smashed the pots and each took a coin. When the galloping dominoes came to rest I had all six!"—J. M. GUYOL, St. Louis, Mo.

Reply, by Mr. Howland Wood—You are perfectly right in assigning the Roman coin to Antoninus Pius. Your piece was struck in approximately the year 145 A. D., corresponding to his fourth consulship. This sized piece was known as sestertius. It has the more common type of reverse without historical significance, consequently your piece would not bring as much as some that were gotten out for especial occasions. It is probably worth, in the condition you have it, between 50 cents and a dollar, let us say, about 75 cents.

French Foreign Legion

THE CINEMA has pictured the Legionnaire's life as being one glorious adventure, but behind stage it is really tremendously hard, and with but little hope of reward. Born soldiers, however, flourish here, as everywhere.

Request:—"I have for some time had a desire to enter the French Foreign Legion. I am eighteen years old and of sound health, have no physical defects and am born of American parents.

Any information on the subject of the Legion will be appreciated."—E. E. KEPNER, Springfield, Mo.

Reply, by Lieut. Townsend:—To enlist in the French Foreign Legion one must be at least eighteen years old and not more than forty. He must be at least five feet in height and in good sound physical condition, this to be determined by a physical examination at the time and place of enlistment. In order to be enlisted the applicant must present himself, at his own expense, at a recruiting office for the French army on French territory. If accepted he will be sent from that point to the headquarters of the Legion in northern Africa at the expense of the French government. Nationality makes absolutely no difference in enlistments for the Foreign Legion. Ability to speak French, while of undoubted advantage to a recruit, is not required. The term of enlistment is five years.

I should advise anyone to thoroughly consider his action before deciding to enlist in the Foreign Legion. The life of a Legionnaire is a tremendously hard one and holds out little hope of reward. Five years is a long period of service, especially if the young recruit finds conditions vastly different and more distasteful than he expected. Discipline is strict, chiefly administered by the non-commissioned officers, and the pay and the ration are both far below the standard of our army. Nevertheless a few Americans have found satisfaction in their service in the Legion. They were, I think, in every case men who were born to be soldiers, who had more than average ability, and who were fitted in character and physique to withstand the dangers and temptations of this unique service.

Some books you might find in your library and which will give you various views of the Legion are: "With the Foreign Legion," by P. L. Hervier; "Life in the Legion," by Fred Martyn and "Soldiers of the Legion," by John Bowe. Also, if you have not done so, read "Beau Geste," by P. C. Wren remembering that it is fiction based upon the more romantic side of life in the Legion.

Gold "Locaters"

A NEW use for radio? This would make getting rich quick comparatively simple, if true.

Request:—"Can you give me any information regarding the 'ground radio gold locater'? On what principle does it work and where manufactured?"—DELBERT CLARK, Warren, Ohio

Reply, by Mr. McNicol—I do not think there is anything to the story about a radio locater of gold. By means of radio measuring systems it is possible to discover areas underground which are better conductors than other areas, but the cause of the relatively low electrical resistance may be mineral formations of any kind, or may be due to high content of moisture in the earth. If you have any special information on a particular radio device for this purpose I'll be glad to look into it for you if you send along description.

Old SONGS that Men have Sung

Conducted by R. W. GORDON

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them. Although this department is conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and if *each request is accompanied with self-addressed envelope and sufficient reply postage* (not attached). Write to Mr. R. W. Gordon direct (*not* to the magazine), care of Adventure, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

MANY more of the songs of the people than most of us realize deal with desperadoes, outlaws, and criminals, or might be called jail-house or prisoners' songs. It is not a new type at all, nor does it indicate that we as a nation are lawbreakers.

The type comes to us directly from the older English and Irish broadsides. From the time of Robin Hood such songs have been popular. Some of them made the outlaw the hero. He was never caught, except by treachery, never repented. He was generous to a fault with the poor. Such were the songs of Robin Hood himself, and of Dick Turpin. Others made the criminal the object of pity, and through his repentance and dying advice took opportunity to warn young men not to follow in his footsteps. Most of the better known American songs belong to this latter class, among them the famous "Boston Burglar."

As they exist today, most of these songs are garbled and incomplete. Not infrequently two or three songs, or rather the fragments of them, have been put loosely together to make one. Once in a while this building up has resulted in a somewhat new type, a type which leaves out all that made the dashing outlaw hero glorious and all that made us pity the repentant criminal.

The Highway Robber

(*Text sent in by Mr. Roscoe C. Smith, W. Va.*)

When I was a little boy
I worked on Market Square,
I used to make some money
But I did not make it fair.

I rode upon the lakes
To learn to rob and steal,
And when I made a big draw
How happy I did feel.

I used to wear the high hat,
My horse and buggy fine,
I used to court those pretty girls
And always called them mine.

I courted them for beauty,
Their love for me was great,
And when I would go to see them
They would meet me at the gate.

But I woke up heart broken
In the Logan County jail;
I had no friends around me,
No one to go my bail.

Down come the jailor
About ten o'clock,
With the keys all in his hand
He bucked up against the lock.

"Cheer up, my prisoner!"
I thought I heard him say,
"You are bound for the penitentiary
For seven long years to stay."

Down come my true love
With ten dollars in her hand;
Said, "Oh, my dearest darling,
I have done all I can.

"The jury has passed the sentence,
The judge says you must go
Away down to Moundsville
For seven long years or more.

"But pray God to be with yor
Wherever you may go,
And the Devil will snatch the jury
For sending you below!"

Another fragment of the same song comes from Mr. James Rall of Chicao, who gives it as sung by his father, "a cowpuncher in Kansas and 'the territory' in early days."

In came the turnkey
About eight o'clock,
His hands full of keys
Some cells to unlock,
Saying, "Cheer you up my prisoner
For the judge, I heard him say,
'You're bound for the penitentiary
Five long years to stay!'"

In came my darling
About nine o'clock,
Saying, "Billy, dearest Billy,
What sentence have you got?"
"Oh the jury found me guilty,
And the judge I heard him say
You're bound for the penitentiary
Five long years to stay!"

In came darling Polly,
  Ten dollars in her hand,
Saying, "Billy, dearest Billy,
  This is all that I can lend.
May heaven bless you, Billy,
  Wherever you may go,
And the Devil take the jury
  That sends you down below!"

Of all my mother's children
  I like myself the best
And those who will divide with me—
  May the Devil take the rest!—
One bottle full of bourbon,
  One full of rock and rye,
We'll have a dram for old times
  Once more before we die!

THIS third song is a curious combination. The last part is straight from the "Boston Burglar." You will notice that the scraps out of which the song is made have not blended well, as is shown by the irregularity both in length of verse and in rhythm. Moreover the refrain is not consistently carried through the song.

All of these failures to make a complete and well rounded whole are more apparent in the text when it is printed than when it is sung.

The Gambler

(*Text sent in by Mr. Roscoe C. Smith, W. Va.*)

The only thing that I done wrong
  Was to learn to gamble when I was young;
I gambled around to beat the band,—
  When I growed up I killed a man.
    It's weep, weep, my honey
    It's hard but I have to go.

They took me down to the jailhouse door,
There I'd been one time before.
    And it's weep, weep, my honey
    It's hard but I have to go.

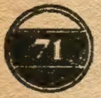
Down came the jailor with the keys in his hand,
Said, "Walk in once more, young man!"
    And it's weep, weep, my honey
    It's hard but I have to go.

They placed me on a westbound train
  One cold and stormy day,
And every station I passed through
  I could hear the people say,
"There goes some naughty burglar
  Bound down in arms (irons) so strong.
He's been the murder of some poor fellow
  He is bound for Frankfort town."

So come all you hustling gamblers,
  And listen unto me,
While you have your liberty
  You should shun bad companee!

INDIVIDUALLY these songs mean little. They have almost no literary merit, and most of them do not tell any consistent story. But when they are taken in the mass they are both important and interesting. I'd like more of them, just as many as you can send in to me!

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all requests for copies of them, direct to R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.



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The Trail *Ahead*

The next issue of ADVENTURE, *out August 1st*

Beginning

The Devil's Castle

A Serial by Arthur O. Friel

"That—that," stammered the ragged *mestizo* who was piloting the white men's *piragua* against the sleepy current of the upper Orinoco—"that is *El Castillo del Diablo.* Men have gone in there and have never come out. I myself knew two bold fellows who went in there to 'watch the devil growl,' they said. And soon afterward a growling *was* heard—but on the two bold ones no man has ever since laid eyes."

Three *Complete Novelettes:*

The Rub o' the Saddle

By Leonard H. Nason

A cavalry lieutenant without a horse—this was the *Swede's* predicament just as his outfit was mounting for action. A stable sergeant with a sense of humor found him one which he characterized as being "as gentle as a kitten, sir." The lieutenant mounted, but from certain signs about the animal he suspected he was in for excitement.

Death Warrant

By F. R. Buckley

The captain of the guard stared in amazement. What meant this command to accompany young *Duke Pietro* on an expedition to punish *Count Rudolpho?* Was not His Highness insane to resent the count's display of grief at the late duke's funeral?

Behold My Friend

By R. E. Hamilton

John Joseph McGonigle, world wanderer, was the only man at the Hong Kong consulate mess that evening who had a good word to say for the Chinese native. And he was quite ready to accept *Du Rande's* wager that one could not take a month's trip into the interior without witnessing at least one act of treachery "so rotten it'll stink like a paddy field."

And—*Other Good Stories*

Medium Boiled, *a boaster in the Border air patrol*, by Thomson Burtis; With a Round Turn, *a luckless ship in a Chinese flood*, The Chains of Africa, King Bilibibs *receives an envoy*, by T. Samson Miller; Bug Eye Loses Hisself, *letters of a wandering partner*, by Alan LeMay; conclusion of Thicker Than Water, Hashknife *and heredity*, by W. C. Tuttle.

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